



LEGENDARY MOONLIGHT SCULPTOR

1ST COMPILATION

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Legendary Moonlight Sculptor

(달빛 조각사)

by

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Synopsis

The man forsaken by the world, the man a slave to money and the man known as the legendary God of War in the highly popular MMORPG Continent of Magic. With the coming of age, he decides to say goodbye, but the feeble attempt to earn a little something for his time and effort ripples into an effect none could ever have imagined.

Through a series of coincidences, his legendary avatar is sold for 3.1 billion won, bringing great joy to him, only to plunge him into despair at losing almost all of it to vicious loan sharks. With revelation of money through gaming, he rises from the abyss with new found resolve and steps forward into the new age of games led by the first ever Virtual Reality MMORPG, Royal Road.

This is the legend of Lee Hyun on his path to becoming Emperor with only his family loving heart, his boundless desire for money, his unexpected mind, his diligently forged body and the talent of hard work backing him.

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Book 01: The Fated Profession

Chapter 01: Birth Of A Dark Gamer

Just imagine a noble, elegant and picturesque life of poverty that you might find in a soap opera, and no matter how poor you were, it still didn't discourage you from showing unconditional love for strangers or even sharing your piece of bread with a warm smile.

If anyone ever claimed that such an illusion existed in reality, Lee Hyun would beat him to a pulp, and strike them once more to finish him off.

Life really was too cruel for the poor. The Labor Welfare Law revised by Parliament, made all jobs unavailable to minors. Illegal though it was, Lee Hyun had worked in every kind of trade imaginable.

From the age of fourteen he took to sewing stitches in a factory. The salary there could only be called meager, but at least he was able to eat for free.

However, being underground with only two ventilation fans running, his health quickly deteriorated. Thanks to this, he damaged his lungs, and gained heavy medical bills.

Then there was a job at a gas station and occasionally he even went around pulling a handcart collecting and selling recyclables.

But no matter how hard he worked, at the end of the day, the only money left in his pockets was chump change.

As a minor, he was forced to get a jobs illegally, and this fact was used by his employers to brutally and mercilessly work him to the bone.

He lived this life of exploitation until the age of twenty, and thanks to this, Lee Hyun knew very well the value of money. However, things would be different now. Now he was finally recognised as an adult by law, and with it came an ID card that would allow him to legally work.

Inserting the ID card in his wallet Lee Hyun mumbled.

“I'll have to work until my body practically breaks down. I should be able to deal with 3 jobs a day.”

When he was a kid, his parents had died in an accident, and now his family only consisted of his grandma and baby sister.

“Alright. From now on we'll be rich.”

Lee Hyun pledged to become so, and returned home.

“Lee Hyun, did you come in just now?”

His grandma asked while lying down snuggled under her blankets.

His grandma after falling down the stairs a few days ago, had dislocated her hip, rendering her unable to go to work and although she was taking medicine to help her cope with the pain, with the household struggling as it was, she couldn't go to the hospital to receive proper treatment and thus could only rest at home, also due to not receiving treatment, every night she could only groan painfully.

Whenever Lee Hyun entered the house, he felt like he was suffocating. It was a lifeless home with an aloof little sister and an old grandma. Even if he didn't know it, it was probably why he disliked coming home even more.

“Hayan?”

“I have no idea. She went out and didn't return. She might be hanging around with the bad crowd again, I'm not sure.”

Lee Hayan was his little sister. He had not seen her face very often recently.

“It's going to be okay. What could happen?”

“You're her one and only brother. A brother should protect his little sister.”

“Yes.”

Lee Hyun smiled wryly and went to his room. Even if he was

forced into physical labor or driving a taxi, he still wanted to send his little sister to college.

For a while now she had been drifting off the rails, but she was bright and intelligent, unlike Lee Hyun. He believed that in college she would meet a good husband and be able to live well. He also wanted to repay his old and ailing grandma for all that she had sacrificed to raise Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan.

“Right, look for work tomorrow. There will probably be an employment test as well...”

Muttering to himself, Lee Hyun turned on the computer. The old computer buzzed to life. As soon as it connected to the internet, as was routine, he accessed a game. That game was Continent of Magic (CoM). A classic game released 20 years ago. An online game that once created a frenzy of gamers in the Republic of Korea.

That game remained at the pinnacle of gaming until just 3 years ago. Lee Hyun’s antiquated computer, assembled by combining parts from here and there, was not capable of handling most games. Nothing but Continent of Magic ran smoothly on it these days.

It was the first game he’d ever played, and only during the game could he have a feeling of enjoyment.

Lee Hyun’s playing style was very peculiar. He did not associate with the other people around him and instead hunted all day long. After killing monsters and raising his level, he headed to harder

hunting grounds. He did not participate in sieges or guild wars at all.

He found pleasure in the game by gradually improving his character's abilities and upgrading equipment. He once hunted for 200 hours straight (8 days) without catching a wink of sleep. It wasn't unusual for him to struggle for a month to raise one level or catch a single monster.

Some might question what kind of fun he was looking for, but for him it was fun simply watching his character grow stronger and when he was able to defeat monsters he was previously unable to, he was thoroughly delighted.

In a short period of time, Lee Hyun had reached the highest level. He had attained the ultimate state where levels no longer rose.

In the two decades since Continent of Magic was released, it was the first and only record in history of this happening. When Lee Hyun looked back, he found no one who could rival his character in supremacy. In hunting grounds where others struggled as a party, he singlehandedly wiped out all the monsters.

After climbing to the highest level, he alone hunted all the ultimate monsters, including Dragons.

Unfortunately for Lee Hyun, he had lost all interest in CoM. Nowadays with the technological advances, the ultimate goal of every game was to equip itself with a virtual reality system.

A truly splendid game by the name of 'Royal Road', was often referenced as the standard for virtual reality gaming. Beginning with it's fully implemented world, the game contained tens of thousands of races and users. Over tens of thousands of jobs and hundreds of thousands of skills.

You could enjoy any adventure as you desired or even go sea fishing with friends for days on end, well that is as long as you don't encounter whimsical typhoon of course.

The massive scale of freedom was amazing, but the best above all else, was the wondrous game's system. Royal Road had the reputation of inducing the ultimate fun a human could enjoy in a game.

“Well for me, that's all just a pie in the sky.”

What could Lee Hyun expect from a computer that slowed down by a slightly more complex web page?

Popular as it was, to install the equipment that made virtual reality possible, would cost over 10,000,000 won (\$10,000 USD). If he had that kind of money laying around, under any circumstance would first go to his grandma's medical bills, or it would go to his little sister's college tuition fund.

To diligently earn money, Lee Hyun had decided to delete his CoM account, and thus remove any form of distraction from his goal of earning money. Unfortunately the game/account had to go.

—Are you sure you want to delete your account?—

Yes | No

Lee Hyun brought the mouse cursor over ‘Yes’. Now, with a single click of the mouse, the treasured character he had raised would disappear forever. Just at the moment he flexed his finger to press down, a thought raced through his mind.

‘Can I sell my character for money? Account sale I think it’s called...’

He remembered reading a newspaper or something, that said buying and selling characters was a commonplace practice these days. That story meant money! It dawned on Lee Hyun that if he was going to delete his character anyway, it wasn’t a bad idea to sell it to another person instead.

Lee Hyun began searching through the internet looking for a character trading site. One search resulted in dozens of sites, and among them he located and entered the one with the largest trading volume.

“So I just post my character here for a price and it’s done?”

Lee Hyun uploaded pictures along with his own character.

Highest level character in Continent of Magic, with the best equipment coming from Dragons that was worth 30 trillion marks.

He decided to begin the auction with the initial price of 50,000 won (\$50 USD). He was afraid that no one would bid if he asked for too high a price right off the bat.

The auction deadline was one day.

Waiting for a longer period of time for a bigger bid of money to come was unlikely to happen. Also, to get a job he needed a decent set of clothes at least a shirt and tie, so he was in a hurry to get money right away.

Typically there was a range of characters and items to determine the price, but the auction content of other people could only be seen by paying members so Lee Hyun was denied access.

Lee Hyun finished posting and went to sleep. Waking up early the next day, he planned to stop by a nearby employment office.

Not even an hour after Lee Hyun post on the auction site, the netizens that occupied the virtual space began heating up the internet.

Initially, no one believed the auction post. With the latest patch to Continent of Magic, they were well aware the level cap had been increased significantly higher.

Currently the maximum level limit was 200.

In the entire server, no one who achieved such a state could be found, possibly because the figure itself was practically impossible for any man alive.

And now, there was an auction post with the character that rose to the highest level for sale.

“Some guy’s playing a prank on us.”

“What sort of moron posted this boring stuff?”

“This has happens so frequently it’s no longer funny.”

Several people commented in this fashion. Passing by some advised no one be fooled while others gave thanks for making them laugh.

From early on in 21st century, phishing entries to steal users information had become a trend and because they were duped so often, many thought it was one such a case again.

“No, never...”

“Can’t be.”

Netizens tried to ignore the auction post. But their curiosity could not be resisted and they entered to see the post again and again.

Auction posts are unconditionally required to post screenshots of the character to be shown.

Each of the files attached to the posting were opened. The character info was truly outstanding. Various stats hit maximum and equipment items were indeed fantastic.

“Where the hell did he get those weapons?”

“Full set of Red Dragon Armor along with Red Dragon’s Backbone Shield? Wow.....”

“He says they were conferred by the Black God of Valor.”

People admired it quite a bit. Somehow it did not seem like a normal phishing post. To forge such detailed images would require a great deal of effort.

“This guy definitely spent a lot of time on it.”

“The interface is Continent of Magic, but what game did he import the equipment from?”

Among those present at the auction post were current graphics designers. Looking at the base photo, they tried to find a blind spot.

“No matter how well-crafted the picture is, microscopic traces will remain if a picture is edited. Even if it looks perfect in the eyes of the general public, when you apply the latest technology, the fake parts will be revealed.”

The designers magnified the images by a factor 10,000 to track down the edited pixels, studied every shade, and even scanned the photo files into a 3D format, trying to prove it was a forgery. But their attempts proved futile. Finally they were forced to acknowledge.

“All these images are real.”

“I’m the chief designer of LK Co. I guarantee these pictures haven’t been altered in anyway.”

Contrary to their expectations, the graphic designers began to confirm the authenticity of the images.

Then real users of Continent of Magic appeared. The moment they saw the images, they shouted in surprise. From the beginning they suspected nothing.

“It’s real. The character name is 'Weed'. This user’s is damn famous.”

“The equipment is his, but I didn’t know he had reached the top level, thats really impressive!”

Lee Hyun always played alone, intentionally avoiding hunting grounds with lots of people. He never participated in sieges, and minor disputes were usually ignored and passed by. But rumors about him had never ceased to stop.

Slaying Dragons and Krakens deemed simply invincible and sweeping through the highest level hunting grounds all single handedly.

Not associating with other players didn’t mean they couldn’t recognize him. Among the remaining users playing CoM, he was a legend. Only Lee Hyun was oblivious to the fact that he was a celebrity.

“So the equipment is real?”

“Then, this can only be called jackpot...”

The initial price for the auction was 50,000 won. Excluding the character value or equipment, just owning it alone according to current prices made the amount was far too low.

People hurriedly began to write down their bids. It went up in a flash from 50,000 to 300,000 won, all the way until 700,000 won. An hour had not passed before it exceeded 1,000,000 won.

The value of selling just one piece of equipment would cover the cost so there was no need to be hesitant about the loss. The bid began to skyrocket.

By this time, many people stopped participating out of desperation because they imagined to some extent the auction closing price.

Although the number of players in Continent of Magic has decreased over time, after the servers were integrated into one and became free to play, there were still quite a lot of users playing.

Initially, it was the players of Continent of Magic who drove up the price, and following them were the wealthy office workers who increased the price further.

At one time, when the game was newly created, Continent of Magic kept most of the Republic of Korea up all night. The highest level character in that game, owning such an antique had such a value that you wanted to show it off to others.

The shrewder among the office workers quickly phoned their similarly aged bosses.

“Director-nim, is that you?”

"Why are you calling me at midnight? Do you want to get fired?"

"Eh? That, well... Director-nim, didn't you use to play Continent of Magic in the past?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Right now, the highest level character in Continent of Magic is up for auction. I thought Director-nim would surely be interested in it..."

"What! W-We-Weed you mean?!"

"Yes. So Director-nim knows about him. His Character is level 200. Stats and equipment are also filled to the max."

Then followed the explanation.

"Right now. With your own money call for a 30,000,000 won bid right now. I'm going back home right now to check it out, try and get the first place bid!"

In the current age, people who hold key positions in companies belonged to the generation that played online games in the middle of their youth. Thanks to this, they boosted the price range even higher!

In large portal sites and every game related website, the main hot topic talked about was the auction of the highest level character from Continent of Magic. Many people started searching for it, and instantly the keyword ranking shot skyward. From this point onward, the real auction began.

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In the meantime though, Lee Hyun was sound asleep, completely unaware of this.

“Nogada... 50,000 won per day. Washing dishes in restaurants, 30,000 won. Supper, ham hocks...”

He was busy summing up what to do the next day in his dreams.

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With the people’s attention all focused on certain person, the auction price was soaring.

So far, nobody knew who Continent of Magic’s highest level was, but it invoked a desire to possess and show off the eternal character of the once greatest game.

The auction price finally exceeded 100,000,000 won (roughly \$100,000 USD).

At this point, ownership exceeded the market price for the individual holdings and equipment. Some people lamented over their lack of money and dropped out of the auction.

“I think the guy selling this character is a big-time weirdo.”

“How could he set the auction period for such a priceless avatar to only a single day?”

“Was he damn sure he would receive the maximum possible price for it?”

In this manner people commented the auction post to soothe their sorrows. Before long, the number of comments went beyond 900.

The auction was automatically extended a few times, and when it exceeded 300,000,000 won, several companies became actively involved.

Due to the simple matter of the auction, the only thing people knew was that there was no end in sight. If the deal was settled for a colossal sum, numerous people would hear about it through news or word-of-mouth, and the publicity effects were formidable.

To place just one ad required a pile of money, also, after painfully spending money to make an ad, people still did not bother looking closely at it. However, what about news of the highest level character being sold for a small fortune? People’s interest and

attention would be concentrated.

Each company's public relations department approached with such a perspective. Digital media intensified the competition, game broadcasters wanted to acquire the highest level character. The value or market price of the character was not a problem. Organizing a series of specials about the famous game in the past and then casting the character in question would increase the reliability and public image of the broadcasters.

Fierce competition led to the price skyrocketing again and again, and the surge in the number of visitors made the item trading site smile with satisfaction.

And then, the auction finally came to an end.

In the end, five major game broadcasters battled one another for the character, but piercing through all that competition, and the one that ended up making the successful bid and received the character was CTS Media. The latest situation was its rapid expansion and increase in broadcast share that made it a promising company to go to. By intervention from the president's secretary, the winning bid was written and submitted as the auction ended.

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“Hello?”

Lee Hyun received a phone call waking him up from his sleep in

the morning.

The construction job from the day before exhausted him and he had fallen asleep. He earned only 30,000 won. It was less than average because he was told off for being incompetent.

"Hello." Unexpectedly, coming from beyond the receiver was the voice of a beautiful woman.

"Um... Looks like you might have called the wrong number."

Lee Hyun, certain that nobody in their right mind would ever call his house tried to put down the receiver as quickly as possible.

However before he did so the woman with the beautiful voice spoke again.....

"You tried selling your account over the internet, is that not so?" she asked.

"Yes, that is correct..."

"This is CTS Media Incorporated. I am the president's secretary Yoon Nahee. We have deposited the amount of the current successful bid of the auction into your account, you can confirm this on the item trading site. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any issues."

“Wa-wait a minute! There was a successful bid?”

"Hmm. Yes, there was. May I ask if you have not checked it yet?"

“No, I was a little busy...”

Yoon Nahee of CTS Media, was the President’s secretary. Even going so far as to work in financial resources, she also knew 8 languages as well. She was by no means an ordinary woman at all, and all those around her were busy flattering her. But the fact that he did not check the auction of such a fortune was enough to overwhelm Yoon Nahee.

“How much was the successful bid?”

Lee Hyun was filled with unease. Hoping for at least over 200,000 won to pay the medical bills, he figured he should ask, but the voice Lee Hyun heard over the phone stunned him into shock.

"3,090,000,000 won." (About \$3,000,000-ish USD)

Originally, Lee Hyun’s character 'Weed', according to the market price was around 150,000,000 won.

Normally games at the height of their popularity that sell their equipment alone could sometimes pass for 100,000,000 won, but if it’s an old game, Like CoM, the market price is usually on the extremely low side.

However, due several factors, including the limited auction deadline, the one-of-a-kind rarity and his characters fame, led to it ultimately being brought over 3,000,000,000 won. The auction itself was newsworthy, which was exactly what CTS Media aimed for.

However, Lee Hyun replied bluntly.

“Are you kidding me?”

"What?"

“I can’t believe you called me just to talk about something as stupid as that. I’m hanging up now.”

After putting down the receiver, Lee Hyun bitterly laughed.

“How did she know about the auction post? And how did she get my number to play a prank?”

Lee Hyun believed none of it. It sounded far too absurd.

However, the moment he accessed the site, his auction post floated on the main screen of the item trading site. Countless people posted comments in real time, and the auction successful bid amount was as she said, 3,090,000,000 won!

Lee Hyun managed not to faint only because of his grim tenacity.

‘If this is a dream, I hope I never wake up.’ he thought.

The next day, Lee Hyun confirmed the money receipt that more than 3,000,000,000 won had really been deposited into his own account.

He pinched his flesh until blood could be seen. This is unmistakably reality! Lee Hyun rushed to show his grandma the bankbook. He still did not dare tell her the story in its entirety.

“Grandma, I've made some money.”

“Yes?”

His grandma replied helplessly. It had only been 3 days after his ID card was issued. He couldn't have earned much.

“Well, good work, Hyun-ah.”

“It was not that much trouble, Grandma.”

Lee Hyun handed her the bankbook.

“What is this?”

“Look. This here is the money I've earned.”

His grandma rubbed her dim eyes a couple of times while looking at the bankbook. The amount stamped into the account, the reaction was disbelief.

“You! Did you steal this?! No, no, this amount of money can't be stolen...”

“What I did was sell my game account.”

“Account?”

“It's far too complex to explain... Anyway, I obtained this money legally.”

“Then really...”

His grandma, filled with rising emotion, softly sobbed.

“Hyun-ah, like others, we can now live without worrying about water and electricity bills anymore?”

“Of course. We can even own our own home.”

“You can go back to school... and Hayan can go to college. We no longer have to live envying others.”

His grandma was moved to tears. It was the same with Lee Hyun.

While remembering all of the suffering and bitterness he received.

“Now we can live happily together, Grandma!”

“Yes, of course.”

Due to all of the tough times together, these two people were thrilled that much more. After several days they obtained a new house and his grandma was finally able to receive proper treatment at the hospital. They also found in addition to her hip, that she was sick in many other ways and had to be admitted to the hospital for a period of time. His little sister Hayan was also delighted. But of course, their happiness was to be short-lived.

Five men dressed in black professional suits. The ones he especially did not want to see the most came to the hospital.

These five well-built black suited men with fresh from the store shoes, literally bullied and pushed their way into the his grandma hospital room, and even though only 5 came into the large hospital room itself, the room now seemed to be filled.

All of the other patients panicked from fear so with the help from their caregivers, they quietly slipped out.

Eventually only Lee Hyun, his grandma and the men remained. Lee Hyun thought it fortunate that his little sister wasn't there the moment they came in. But nothing good ever came from those men in suits. He expected it would be the no different from before.

“Lee Hyun. I've recently heard of the good fortune bestowed to your family...”

The blonde haired man spoke.

Lee Hyun shot back sharply.

“So?”

“In the past your father took out a loan with us, and now we're here to collect on that debt.”

“Debt?”

“Yes. And now that you have the money, I believe you're ready pay it back.”

Lee Hyun gulped swallowing his saliva. When his parents passed away, Lee Hyun had inherited all of his father debt of 100,000,000 won.

It would've been fine if he had done the waiver of inheritance, but at that time Lee Hyun was still too young to understand and

did not know about this law. In addition, his grandma, with the grief of losing her only child, also failed to apply for the waiver of inheritance in court within 3 months and thus legacy was inherited.

Therefore, Lee Hyun had become indebted to the loan sharks for whooping 100,000,000 won debt. He also knew how ruthless they were about collecting. But now he had a lot of money. There was no need to be afraid.

“I will repay the debt. How much is it?”

“Repay? Your words are a little short. Well, that’s fine. We treasure our esteemed customers. The money you have to pay is about 3,000,000,000 won.”

At the man’s words, Lee Hyun’s temples throbbed with rage.

“Absurd! The money my father borrowed was clearly 100,000,000 won.”

“Hey, it’s been 8 years. As time goes by, interest piles up.”

“Such a ridiculous thing... I’ll report you to the police!”

“Report? Knock yourself out. You think the police will take your side?”

“Police are the people’s cane.”

“Puhahahahaha.”

The men laughed at Lee Hyun’s words. In particular the blonde haired man, hearing that absurdness, he put his hand on his forehead and had a good laugh. The man standing quietly behind the blonde hair man spoke. Considering the atmosphere, he seemed like their leader.

“Explain to the kid straight up. Do not cause unnecessary trouble.”

“Yes, Hyung-nim. I’m sorry. Well kid, listen carefully. What we’re doing does not break any laws. Because we received legitimate interest. To begin with, the interest is 50% of the principal amount per year. Do you want me to calculate? By year 1 it increased from 100,000,000 to 150,000,000, by year 2, roughly 220,000,000, by year 3 it topped 330,000,000, by year 4 close to almost 500,000,000.”

At the calculation report, Lee Hyun felt despair. Debt increased 5 fold in just 4 years. 8 years passed, so it might have been 2,500,000,000, but the time that passed was more than exactly 8 years so it was not wrong to say 3,000,000,000.

Lee Hyun while being harassed by the gang members did not know how much debt he was in. Without him knowing, it accumulated to as much as 3,000,000,000.

Bankruptcy!

Others with a 3,000,000,000 debt would file bankruptcy. Even after bankruptcy you would probably owe a few thousand won. Lee Hyun did not even consider bankruptcy. It costs money just to file bankruptcy. The courts and legal counselors. Paying them money and following the necessary steps, you could enter bankruptcy.

Lee Hyun could not even afford to file for bankruptcy. In fact, even if you had the money, you can't seriously believe the vicious loan sharks would leave you alone to file bankruptcy.

“We want the 3,000,000,000.”

“No-no way!”

“No way? Suit yourself. If you don't want to we will come again tomorrow to collect. At that time what you have to pay back will increase a little more, but your call.”

The men dressed in black suits exuded confidence. The confidence of free will, the confidence of power.

And also, Lee Hyun knew it was better to repay the debt if he could. In the first place there were no other alternatives, they came knowing he had money. The men laughed with a smirk.

“Poor grandma has been injured and hospitalized, but she sure looks comfortable in the hospital. Much like your little sister in the

hallway. Such a beautiful little sister, I bet she could be sold for quite a bit on the island...”

“Don’t you dare touch Hayan!”

“Relax, nothing has happened, yet. Right now, we’re just talking kid. But what if this family of three was admitted to the hospital all at once. It’d be the most touching sight.”

Lee Hyun could not stand the veiled threats anymore. It couldn’t be helped. It would be enough if the men left. Those unable to repay the borrowed money, in the slums he had seen the fates of those with no money to give them. If there was a sin in the first place, it was borrowing money from them.

Not even able to depend on the law, Lee Hyun had to surrender his bankbook. The men received the bankbook on the spot, and pulled out 90,000,000 won in cash from a bag. With it was the IOU for 100,000,000 won written by Lee Hyun’s parents 8 years ago. From the beginning they knew everything and came firmly prepared.

“Thank you. And sorry for your troubles.”

As the men exited the hospital room, Lee Hyun yelled.

“Wait a minute!”

“Why kid? What’s up?”

“Someday, I will surely make you pay for this!”

“What?”

“Because the money has been repaid, you guys think that this is the end of things. But it means later on I will get even with you guys.”

The men were about to laugh again. However, at the sight of Lee Hyun’s eyes, their laughter died before ever coming out.

A young, wild beast. The miasmic embrace of his eyes had sent a chill down their spines.

“I see you still have some spirit in you. We need to teach a fearless kid like you about the world.”

The men rolled up their sleeves. But Lee Hyun was not the slightest bit scared, nor did he shrink back.

“Enough. We have already collected the money, don’t do anything unnecessary.”

“But...”

“Do you really want to make a scene in a hospital?”

“Understood, Hyung-nim.”

The men thundered getting out.

“And kid.”

The casual leader of the men looked at Lee Hyun and gave him advice.

“I am Han Jinsup of Myongdong. Do you really your boldness will work in this poisonous world? If you think it’s unfair, make 3,000,000,000 in 5 years and look for me. Then I will serve you as my Hyung-nim.”

The loan sharks departed. Lee Hyun sat down on the ground helplessly. And at the sound of his little sister crying in the hallway, his grandma made a deep sorrowful sigh.

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After being robbed to the tune of 3,000,000,000 won, he did not have the strength to do anything. He was slammed by an extreme emptiness. However, on the third day after being robbed, he stood up.

There was still hope. So he could not sit and hesitate. A smile casually drifted to Lee Hyun’s mouth. Amidst the tears, laughter

emerged.

It was all but a moment, but the touching experience of having a large sum of money that seemed to have enlighten him just a little about how to really live in the world.

‘Right. If I earned once, I can earn twice.’

Lee Hyun was busy. 90,000,000 won (roughly \$90,000 USD) was not taken away, but it did not mean he could use it all. Because the house contract was already set at 50,000,000 won so that was already set aside.

He was still able to cancel the contract if he wanted, but doing so would mean he would have to pay a penalty fine. He would rather die than pay the penalty.

Ultimately, the amount that could be used was only 40,000,000 won!

All thanks to the real estate slump in the early 21st century.

*

Using part of the remaining money, Lee Hyun registered in many martial arts halls such as aikido, kendo and taekwondo. He placed himself on a rigorous schedule traversing to as many as 6 different places a day. Over time his body was broken down and rebuilt at the various gyms as he continue to master these martial arts

quickly.

The instructors there called him a 'Wild Beast'. Building his stamina, he swung his sword all day long, enough to cause blood to flow from his hands.

Virtual reality game!

A place where depending on how a person moves their body in real life can affect how your body moves in virtual reality. Then wouldn't learning martial arts and studying about the game system a little more be helpful?

Of course, those that learned martial arts would not be completely advantageous. But to be even a little stronger, even at level 1, it was better to learn martial arts.

Imagine being at least 10% stronger throughout the game, the tremendous effects it would bring. Because of that, Lee Hyun spent most of his morning and afternoon learning martial arts and getting fitter, and during the evening, studied about virtual reality games. Things like: which game had the most users and how the game system worked was thoroughly analyzed.

For every profession, city and skill Lee Hyun made analysis tables and pinned them onto the walls of his room. The paper records bombarded Lee Hyun's room.

For 1 whole year. Lee Hyun learned about martial arts and

studied virtual reality games. The time of 1 year wasn't just a preparation period, it was also used to closely observe the development of Royal Road.

The virtual reality game at the end was as expected. Royal Road, like its namesake, walked the path of the emperor with serenity. Possessing more than 75% of the world's game market share, more than 90% of Korean gamers played this game. It could practically be called a scheduled sequence.

Especially during wars of kings, it came to a point where it overwhelmed the viewership of all other networks. The only game in the world where anybody could obtain fame, power and money. Royal Road was the result of an ingenious system interlocking with virtual reality.

‘Great. All according to plan.’

Lee Hyun's cold eyes stared at the monitor.

That day he purchased a capsule used to connect to Royal Road for 10,000,000 won. It was expensive enough that tears seeped out, but he constantly reminded himself that it was a necessary investment. With all preparations finished. It was the beginning of the game. He felt like a soldier heading onto the battlefield.

—Connect to Royal Road?—

Yes | No

When the message came, Lee Hyun shouted without any hesitation.

“Yes!”

Chapter 02: Wild Beast Appears

—The scan on your iris and vein has determined that you are an unregistered user.

Do you want to create a new account?—

Yes | No

When Lee Hyun was connected to Royal Road, the first sound that reached his ears was a feminine voice.

He looked around to see who had spoken to him, but there was no one else; a space within the universe. Then he realized that he was in the middle of the activation process of a new account.

“Yes!”

—Select the name of your avat...—

“Weed.” Weed, the lowliest of the low in the plant kingdom. To Lee Hyun, it sounded most suitable for him.

—Select your gender from male, female or neutr...—

“Male!”

—Royal Road has forty-nine races.

You may select your race from the primary twenty-nine...—

“Human!”

—You may alter your appearan...—

“The way I am.”

—Your account has been activated.

Your stats and class shall be determined while you are playing Royal Road...—

“Pass!”

—Select a city and kingdom you want to start.—

“The Citadel of Serabourg, Rosenheim Kingdom!”

— Welcome to Royal...—

“Pass!”

Afraid to waste even a second, Lee Hyun skipped the tutorial stage and made quick decisions according to his prearranged plan. 300,000.00 won (about \$300 USD) monthly bill for the game was a great expense to him.

*

In Royal Road, there are over a hundred major cities and thousands of towns. A new player begins his adventure in a capital or a major city of comparable size.

Similar to where Weed is starting out.

Flash

With a flash of light, he appeared in the Citadel of Serabourg, Rosenheim.

“This is...”

Weed was swayed by the sight of countless avatars, users and

NPCs (Non-Player Characters) alike, that he thought he was lost in the middle of Seoul.

“Where am I? Unbelievable!”

Astonished, Weed couldn't believe his eyes as he looked around. The racket of those haggling and chattering rang in his ears. The view unfolding before his eyes was exactly the same as the real world, with people busily coming and going.

He lowered his eyes to his legs standing on the ground. His senses told him that it felt absolutely solid. Strangers passed him by as he stood still in a daze.

“Look at him. I'm sure he's a newbie.”

“It looks like he's never played a virtual reality game before.”

While passing by, some users threw fleeting remarks over their shoulders. They stung him enough to pull himself together.

They're right. It's Royal Road here. The world of virtual reality, and my new workplace.

No matter how thoroughly Weed had prepared, his knowledge of virtual reality and his research into the game system came second to the strange experience he was having now.

He had been bewildered, but it was temporary, and he soon calmed down, differences also began to catch his eye.

His senses were consistent with reality, yet people around him were clad in armor or wearing leather vests.

Close to the spot where he had shown up was a bulletin board exhibiting maps and descriptions of Rosenheim Kingdom, and directions for using the basic interface.

‘It’s time that I start.’

Weed clenched his fist, and then he started to exercise. He sat down and stood up, and then proceeded with standing high jumps, tumbling, kicking and punching.

He twisted his waist around and carefully tested one joint after another. He wiggled fingers and toes, and jerked his head back and forth.

Even though a tsunami of humiliating comments gushed forth from other users nearby, Weed was determined to overcome it.

“What the heck is he doing now?”

“It looks like he’s moving his body. I guess he’s still uncomfortable with the virtual reality game.”

“Oh, I see. But what’s the point of making a show in the middle of a crowded street?”

The sense of humiliation which Weed had been fighting so hard to keep back prevailed over his determination. What a scene he’d been making in front of strangers!

“Dammit!” Weed left in a hurry and headed elsewhere.

As a newcomer in Royal Road, he was confined to the city of origin for a week in the real world and four weeks in the game (a four to one ratio), thanks to the parallax between one place and the other.

A great majority of newcomers were getting down to basics, like taking on simple quests, or learning crafting skills, such as tailoring, blacksmithing and cooking, which are relatively easy to acquire.

The game boast of its unrestricted flexibility and freedom, almost to the extent of complete disorder and anarchy, and currently while all the highest ranking positions are still occupied by NPCs instead of users it is possible to get these jobs, this reinforces the need for personal contacts within Royal Road.

On the other hand, a considerable number of users work in libraries or stores to make money.

The Central Square brims with merchant wannabes who set up

kiosks to buy and sell with fellow users and many new parties in pursuit of adventure are formed on the spot every minute.

After watching them casually, Weed didn't hesitate to head for the Training Hall.

The Training Hall is open to any user for as long as he or she pleases, and most users visit the hall to experiment with newly acquired skills.

It is nearly impossible to find someone who, like Weed, would go straight to the Training Hall to train as soon as he created a new avatar.

It's not only that newcomers are more interested in finding out what the kingdom and city where they were born look like, but it's also largely because training in the Training Hall is deemed rather ineffective in the end.

The moment the instructor saw Weed walk in the entrance, his eyes glared fiercely.

"Young adventurer, I presume you have arrived at the Versailles continent very recently," the instructor said.

"Yes, Sir" Weed said shortly. He was still upset that he had made a laughing stock of himself on the first day.

"You shall find sword training absolutely necessary when you

come to confront monsters. Do you need my guidance? I tell you, take any unattended scarecrow and strike him in any way you want. A wooden sword is placed in front of a scarecrow, and it is all yours.”

“Thank you, sir. That’s enough. I don’t need any more guidance.”

“Godspeed.”

Weed clutched the wooden sword and walked to a scarecrow standing alone in the most remote corner. Then, he began beating it, once, twice, thrice. His hands were gradually getting accustomed to the weight of the wooden sword and the sense of hitting the scarecrow.

In Royal Road, a new avatar’s level is locked for the first four weeks, for he is forbidden to travel beyond the city’s gate and to hunt monsters in the field.

It is most common to carry out as many quests as possible, thus building up favorable public service points, earning money and forming your own web of personal contacts.

Nonetheless, Weed silently carried on striking the scarecrow with the wooden sword.

There are about a thousand scarecrows in the Training Hall of the Citadel of Serabourg, and an unlimited supply of wooden

swords on the walls, which could come in handy. The Hall is usually frequented by users who crave to test their skills.

At this moment, however, everyone's eyes were fixed on somewhere in particular.

“This guy's definitely got iron guts.”

“He's freaking tough.”

“Can't believe any sane man is going so far.”

Weed was soaked in sweat.

The white shirt and pants issued to him in the beginning had absorbed sweat and stuck fast to his body. He still dealt one blow after another to the scarecrow without a minute's break.

Ting

Strength has risen by 1 point (+1 STR)

After six hours of striking the scarecrow, Weed heard good news.

He felt as if the muscles in his hands that were clutching the wooden sword were getting lighter.

“Open Stats Window,” Weed mumbled while striking the scarecrow.

Character Name: Weed

Alignment: Neutral

Profession: None

Title: None

Level: 1

Fame: 0

Health: 100

Mana: 100

Strength: 11

Agility: 10

Vitality: 10

Wisdom: 10

Intelligence: 10

Charisma: 5

Luck: 5

Offence: 3

Defense: 0

Magic Resistance: None

Weed’s avatar was so feeble that there was nothing remarkable.

-Five hours later-

Ting

Vitality has risen by 1 point (+1 VIT)

Agility has risen by 1 point (+1 AGI)

The two stats rose almost at the same time.

“Whew.”

Weed finally put down the wooden sword and took a short break. Without eating or drinking, he had been hitting the scarecrow nonstop for nearly eight straight hours now.

He was physically fatigued, and worse, his throat was burning with thirst, his stomach empty and hollow.

“Open Inventory”

Given the preset keyword, the semi-transparent images of all the belongings in Weed's inventory floated in front of his eyes. The only objects inside his inventory were a canteen and ten pieces of rye bread. That was all.

In Royal Road, you have to get hold of what you need on your own. Other users make money by carrying out easy quests for the four weeks, but Weed could not spare even a minute.

He took out a piece of rye bread and the canteen, and nibbled a mouthful of bread. As he ate food, it appeased his hunger and the satisfaction factor rose.

"I'm supposed to have a meal every five hours. I'd better eat more often if I exercise intensely, but I don't need to raise the satisfaction factor to the full. All I need to do is just stay away from death."

Once Weed finished the meal swiftly, he took the wooden sword in his grip and stood in front of the scarecrow.

"He's at it again."

"He's nuts."

"I think he holds a grudge against it or something."

"I don't think he'll stop until he breaks that scarecrow into pieces."

Was it an illusion that the scarecrow looked like it shivered at that very moment? Weed's wooden sword struck every inch of the scarecrow. The same type of questions arose among all the spectators.

"Why the heck is that guy striking the scarecrow?"

"I don't think it will help at all—if he wants to raise the expertise rating for a skill, it's much better to go out to the field and use it on a rabbit than the scarecrow here."

"Look at what he's doing. He's not using any skill. To me, it looks more like he's beating up the scarecrow on impulse."

"Maybe he's bringing up his stats," a knight in dazzling armor commented, immediately attracted the attention of everyone else on the scene.

"Can you improve your stats by just hitting the scarecrow?" a dark-skinned ranger asked.

"Huh? Ah, yes, that's right," the knight said.

"Then, why don't you just keep hitting a scarecrow instead of sweating hard to raise your level?" the ranger asked again.

The knight named Pluto had a considerably high level, so he has

learned a wealth of information from reliable sources. He was also the only man who correctly guessed the motive of Weed's actions.

If an avatar uses up his stamina, his vitality and stamina will develop as a consequence, and if a wizard casts a great many spells, his wisdom and intelligence will rise.

But such an increase is trivial compared to stat bonus points accompanied by a level up.

Half a day of hitting a scarecrow without a rest might yield one or two stats. Considering that the number of stat bonus points as reward for a level up is five, what Weed was doing looked idiotic.

“It really is silly.”

A sorceress shook her head when she heard Pluto's explanation. But he thought otherwise.

“It works,” Pluto said.

“Excuse me?”

“You can earn only small amount of experience points if you kill a weaker monster than your current level. You know that, right?”

“Of course”

“In other words, the higher your level is, the harder it is to gain a level. But if you improve your strength by undergoing such a drill in the initial phase, you can hunt monsters easier later on. It will take effect throughout the game.”

“You know this method, so I guess you went through the same training? No, wouldn’t everyone do the same if they knew about it?”

“Not really. Even if people knew, no one would do it. Back to the point, is there anyone who wants to keep hitting that scarecrow for ten hours to improve their strength by one point?”

“...”

“There are limits to how far you can increase your stats by working on a scarecrow that’s known as the weakest opponent. In the case of strength, I estimate it’s forty or so. Is there anyone who wants to keep hitting the scarecrow for at least a month to raise forty points in strength? I would get sick and tired of it, and give it up in days.”

The crowd watching Weed nodded in unison.

You’d rather look for a cool weapon than to strike a scarecrow ceaselessly for a full month in order to bring up your strength by forty points. An item that keeps up strength by forty points is unique, yet far from rare.

“This works only for newbies who can’t go beyond the walls. It was once popular to beat a scarecrow like this, but it was quickly abandoned because, when you weigh against it what you can get in the long run, it’s way too boring, and painstaking.”

Weed overheard the heated discussion that those around him were having. He wished he could have trained somewhere else, but so long as he wasn’t allowed to leave the Citadel, he could not avoid attracting unfavorable attention in the Hall.

What makes you call this boring and painstaking? Weed swung the wooden sword at full strength.

If you work hard, your avatar gets stronger step by step. When your avatar evolves, it can defeat stronger monsters and make more money. For Weed, this was the ultimate entertainment of his lifetime.

Weed was inherently inclined to routine physical labor. All this time, the instructor was watching him with awfully gratified eyes.

*

Three weeks had passed in game time. Weed logged on to Royal Road on a daily basis, it was almost to the point of addiction for him, except for the minimum sleeping hours he wouldn't stop playing. Thanks to his vastly improved physical condition, which he had resolved to build up before he started playing Royal Road, it enabled him to get by with no more than four hours sleep a day. Now that he looked back at the last three weeks, it made him sick

to even think of it.

Once he signed into the game, he spent nearly eighty hours on average striking the scarecrow monotonously, which had mentally worn him out. Had it not been for the occasional pop-up messages encouraging him, he would have given up.

Ting

Strength has risen by 1 point (+1 STR)

Agility has risen by 1 point (+1 AGI)

New stat: Fighting Spirit:

You can call on superhuman strength temporarily, or bring weaker monsters to their knees with your force of will from your eyes alone. You are prohibited from distributing any bonus points to this stat, and it will rise spontaneously, depending on the avatar's action, or especially if you're fight monsters for a long time, or often confront monsters stronger than your current level.

New stat: Endurance:

You're likely to use less stamina from an action. You are prohibited from distributing any bonus points to this stat.

In Royal Road, a new stat is sometimes created besides the original ones.

Pop-up messages related to the skill occasionally appeared, too. The only skill Weed had at that point was Sword Mastery.

Ting

Level Up: Sword Mastery (Beginner Lv: 3 | 0%):

Increases Attack Power with a sword (+30% ATK)

Increases Attack Speed with a sword (+9% ATK SPD)

Every time a pop-up message appeared, Weed was secretly delighted by the progress he was making. But what was deeply troubling him was a sense of frustration that he had been falling behind in his goals.

For the last three weeks, as he devoted himself to beating down the scarecrows, his strength had increased only by twenty-eight points, agility twenty-five, and vitality twenty-two.

“Unless I pick up my pace, I’ll end up wasting more precious time on this scarecrow even after the four week restriction is lifted. I must finish it before I can leave the Citadel.”

Weed’s eyes burned with determination.

Rumble

At that moment, Weed’s stomach decided it was time to eat. Aside from the slow progress with his stats, he was tormented by the fact that he was running out of bread.

He could run to a nearby fountain and fill the canteen with water, but bread was different – he had to pay money for it.

Sniff

Sniff

He smelled an appetizing scent coming from somewhere.

Weed, swinging the wooden sword, paused and caught a glimpse of the instructor, who was taking out his lunch box for the lunch break.

“Hehe, Honorable Instructor.” Weed said, as he wagged his invisible tail, he walked to the instructor.

“Hmm, who is this, none other than Weed-nim? What has brought you here?” the instructor said warmly.

“Wouldn’t it be lonely to have lunch alone? I am here to keep you company,” Weed said obsequiously.

Growl

While his stomach growled, Weed lied with a straight face, but he could not deceive the instructor.

“I take it that you are hungry. Sit beside me! I have brought plenty of food, sufficient to feed two mouths.”

“Thank you, sir!”

“Enough with your humility! It is my honor to serve a meal to a would-be great adventurer like you, Weed-nim. I assure you that

your reputation will someday resound beyond the bounds of the Citadel of Serabourg. When that day comes, please remember me!”

“Yes, Sir. I certainly will.”

After flattering the instructor lightly, Weed enjoyed lunch together with him. It was kind of a sad scene, yet he was grateful that with little effort, he could stuff his belly.

He wasn’t sucking up to a real man, anyway. What was the big deal about smooth-talking an NPC with artificial intelligence?

Beside the stats that Weed had increased while beating the scarecrow to death for the last three weeks, he'd established an affinity with the instructor. This supplementary effect was somewhat admirable.

While Weed was busy devouring lunch, the instructor suddenly asked, “By the way, Weed-nim, what do you think of Sculpture Mastery?”

Sculpture mastery? What the heck is sculpture mastery?

Weed chewed a mouthful of boiled rice and swallowed it before he asked back, “What do you mean by Sculpture Mastery?”

“I am merely curious of your opinion. I wonder what sort of view you have about Sculpture Mastery in general,” the instructor said.

At that moment, the speed of Weed's brain racking which could be heard and despite it being absurd to try to convert it to a numerical value, was multiplied roughly by five.

I've so far figured out that the instructor is a simple-minded and near-sighted kind of guy. He sincerely believes that the sword is invincible, and to him, it's the highest virtue to exercise hard enough to break out in a sweat in the Training Hall. And now he's asking me what I think about Sculpture Mastery?

As soon as Weed collected his thoughts, he frowned.

"Honorable Instructor! I can't believe you even mentioned it. I am a man of the sword. Did you ask for my opinion upon, God forgive me, Sculpture Mastery? I am most disappointed. This is my answer—never, ever, not even once has such a lowly handicraft crossed my noble mind."

Despite Weed's offensive tone, which would have enraged him in other situations, the instructor unexpectedly clapped his hands in delight.

"I knew you would say so!"

"It is out of question. The likes of Sculpture Mastery are nothing but awful mistakes of God which do not deserve a second of our attention. Why do I, a man of the sword, need to ever think of it?"

“You are most agreeable, Weed-nim” Weed sensed that, though it was invisible, his friendship with the instructor moved to a higher degree at that moment.

This is the way to make friends with somebody. You don’t need to shed blood with them. You don’t need to squander time and money on them. You just join them in speaking ill of something or someone at the first opportunity presented, and it will invoke their sympathy.

Weed expected the instructor to change the topic of the conversation, but he rubbed the back of his head and stayed on the subject.

“It is rumored that the unknown man who mastered sculptural and once carved the moonlight,” the instructor said.

“I doubt it, sir. A rumor is always prone to distortion. How can anyone learned in worthless Sculpture Mastery carve the moonlight? Perhaps it was a pebble in the shape of a moon?” Weed said cheerfully.

“You think so, too? But I was told by my predecessor. His honorable name is Mellium, currently a Royal Knight...”

Sculpting was perceived as a fruitless skill, no more than trimming a small block of wood to produce a fine ornament.

Rumor had it that if you elevated the craft beyond a certain stage,

you would be capable of making projectile weapons of metal. But it was undoubtedly one of those obsolete skills that nobody bothered learning.

“On that account Weed-nim, this question of Sculpture Mastery intrigues me. It surely is beyond doubt that the craft cannot possibly rival our sword under any circumstances, but would you find out whether the rumor has a grain of truth? I am asking a favor of you because you are a trustworthy man. If you accept my request, I’d be happy to hear it,” the instructor said.

Then a pop-up message appeared in front of Weed’s eyes.

Ting

Quest: A Mystery Sculptor Rumored to Have Visited the Royal Palace:

A rumor that a man who had mastered sculptural art did carve the moonlight has been prevalent in the royal court of Rosenheim Kingdom for a long time. Look into the rumor to determine whether it is true or not!

Difficulty level:E

Quest requirements:

Close friendship with instructor reserved only for those who have not acquired Sculpture Mastery.

Acknowledged as reliable by the instructor for a constant passion for Sword Mastery.

Weed barely held a whisper of triumph at bay. His instinct told him that this quest was the rarest of the rare.

This was because the quest had to meet very tricky conditions in order to get it started. Close friendship with the instructor— who would have ever thought of that?

Most users in general don't even know the location of the Training Hall, let alone visit it when they acquire a new skill, they don't need to come all that way to practice it on a scarecrow of all things. Moreover, it is a rare occasion that anyone is willing to get stuck in the Hall and thrash the scarecrow over and over to bring up his stats in the crudest way, as Weed had done.

If you dig out enough dirt, you might find a few users like that, but in Weed's case, he had spent almost all of the last three weeks with the scarecrow. Who else could have toughed it out to such an extent?

Speaking of close friendship with the instructor, it is nearly

impossible to achieve unless someone like Weed approaches him, fawning to scam a share of his lunch.

Even with all the conditions above met you still have to begin your new adventure at the Citadel of Serabourg in Rosenheim Kingdom against all odds, not to mention that you have to find the right moment to slander Sculpture Mastery along with the instructor.

This is great. I'm about to go broke and starve to death. At difficulty level E, this quest looks like it's easy to finish.

Weed nodded at the instructor.

“I am honored to accept it. Although I do not believe any of that nonsense, I will find out what it was like carving the moonlight.”

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

“I appreciate it Weed-nim. I entrust you with this task. Take this money as a retainer,” the instructor said, handing over two silvers. “I give you my advice: visit the sculpture shop first and glean

information from there”

A piece of rye bread, while literally tasteless, was enough to fill the stomach, and costs three coppers. Since a silver coin equals a hundred copper coins, it is safe to say Weed had just received the equivalent of sixty-six pieces of rye bread for the retainer, plus change.

He was certain that once the quest was completed, he could expect more rewards from the instructor.

“Great! I don’t need to worry about running out of bread for the time being.”

Many years of first-hand experience of habitual famine persuaded him to avoid being malnourished at any cost.

Chapter 03: The Instructor's Request

Weed first walked to the fountain and filled his canteen with water, and then headed for the sculpture shop. It was Weed's first trip down the streets of the Citadel, and it was crammed with users and NPCs.

“We need a cleric at level 17 or above!”

“Hey, guys! We're going to raid Cave Lasok. Anyone want to join us?”

Plenty of users were on the street, but none of them gave a passing glance at Weed. He didn't mind it though. Wandering around in a traveler's outfit, deprived of even a breastplate, revealed that he has yet to meet the minimum requirement of the four week game play needed before he could leave the Citadel.

Among the innumerable stores that operate in the capital of Rosenheim Kingdom, the sculpture shop holds a special position.

Most ordinary adventurers can barely recall where the sculpture shop is located because it was meaningless to them. Only an extremely small number of users who learned the Sculpture Art visit periodically. But the sculpture shop stands right next to the jewelry store on Central Avenue, and is one of the few frequently visited shops by the noblemen/women.

Chime

Weed entered the sculpture shop.

“Welcome to— oh, what brings you here, stranger?”

The shopkeeper was receiving a new customer with a gentle smile, until he saw Weed’s outfit at that point, he suddenly changed the tone of his voice.

Weed looked around the shop, only to find that there was no other customer except for him. A blacksmith’s workshop or a grocery store is always full to the limit of occupancy, but the sculpture shop only entertains a few customers a day, if any.

If comparing daily revenues, however, the sculpture shop does lag behind the blacksmith’s workshop. In other words, the sculpture shop sells pretty expensive merchandises.

Weed adjusted his collar and asked politely,

“I have come here to find an answer to the question which troubles me so dearly, sir.”

“So you want to ask me a question, stranger?”

“Yes, sir. If you could spare me a second.”

“I am busy right now, please leave.”

The shopkeeper rejected him right away, sounding very annoyed. As Weed's fame was zero, and they were unacquainted, the shopkeeper had every right to chase him out of the shop.

"Yes, sir. I will see you later."

"Goodbye." said the shopkeeper.

Weed was taking his time to retreat to the doorway. Then, he casually shot a glance at the statues that were on display.

"How grand!"

Weed exclaimed

"The grandeur of this statue fascinates my soul. Do you supply this to the Rosenheim Court?"

The shopkeeper could not help but lend an ear to Weed.

"Which one are you talking about, stranger?"

"This two-headed eagle made of pure gold. I dare not guess which master carved this, but I can sense the excellence of his workmanship. It is dignified beyond dispute. It is so full of life that I almost mistook it for a real eagle, and I am blessed in visiting this place. This store deserves this class of item. They have opened my

humble eyes to a heavenly beauty that has descended to Earth”

Whether or not the shopkeeper realizes, his mouth was forming a horizontal crescent. “Are you interested in sculptural art, traveler?”

“I daresay I am— I am only wishing to feel peace of mind at the sight of outstanding statues, and my soul craves to be even a small part of the magnificent spirit embodied in them”

“Come over and sit down. You may be good company to arouse me from boredom.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Would you like a cup of tea?”

“Only if you’re kind enough to offer me cold honeyed water. I will be satisfied with a cup of cold water.”

“Sure! Of course I have it.”

Weed drank the honeyed water blended by the shopkeeper, which soothed the exhaustion that he had accumulated over the last three weeks.

“Now tell me what has been troubling you so much?” Asked the shopkeeper.

“Yes, sir. But can you please forgive me for asking for a brief tour of these statues on display before everything else? I have business that demands your guidance, yet it is less urgent than comforting my poor soul that wishes to have a good look at these masterpieces of art!” Weed said.

“You may look at them for as long as you wish. Isn’t it the *raison d’être* of fine statues to please those who appreciate their value?” The shopkeeper consented with a content smile.

(PR: *Raison d’être*: A French phrase meaning "reason for existence")

Weed felt that he had won his goodwill, one scarcely disturbed by visitors and away from public attention. Suppose that you asked to look at various items in a grocery store— the next second you would be kicked out.

Weed relished the statues on display at leisure. But he had his own agenda. “I doubt sculpture mastery will make a pile of money.” The most expensive statue that is currently present is worth 30 silvers. The quality statues are made of stones or rare wood, and in spite of the impressive workmanship, the materials themselves were not costly in the first place. They were nothing more than wooden carvings, or engraved stones.

Weed knew that there would be money if he could create a gigantic lion statue or bronze status, but he wasn’t fooled by the possibility that was so far off. What kind of nobleman with so

much money would order a new statue every year? He needed to reach the top of the ladder in order to do really well as a sculptor. Little competition guaranteed that it wouldn't need too much effort to become the best in the industry.

Still, it was a niche market, too small to count on. The guaranteed way to make a fortune was to target other users as potential consumers. They were always leveling up and demanding better equipment, so on and so forth.

Fire weapons, strong equipment enchanted bracelets and rings were popular among users, but statues were valueless to them except in rare instances.

“Waste of time, waste of money.” he thought.

Weed's primary purpose for starting this game was to make money, with a capital M. He looked around the display for the last time and passed his verdict on the sculpture mastery.

“This skill is worth a dime a dozen” Weed thought as he sat down across from the shopkeeper.

“Now, what are you looking for?” asked the shopkeeper.

“I am interested in a past event. I was told that someone had carved the moonlight in the Royal Palace fifty years ago. I would like to know if there's any truth of that event” Weed said.

“Oh that event! It is legendary tale that has been passed down among the sculptors. I also heard it from some trustworthy patrons from the Royal Court”

Weed had thought that carving the moonlight was impossible, another urban legend, but the owner of the sculptor shop also knew the rumor that the instructor at the Training Hall had claimed to have heard.

Ting

Quest Completed: A Mystery Sculptor Rumored to Have Visited the Royal Palace:

The rumor that had reached the instructor’s ear really took place. A sculptor carved the moonlight, and it was widely, yet secretly, known amongst the Serebourgians, though it remained an enigma how he carved the moonlight.

Reward:

Return to the instructor to claim it.

Weed grinned broadly. This was, after all, a simple quest with

the lowest difficulty level of E. Although at the same time it could've turned out tricky if he had failed becoming a 'friend' with the shopkeeper.

How that he was done with the quest, the next move was to return to the Training Hall and earn a reward from the instructor. As Weed was looking for the right moment to say his farewells and leave, the shopkeeper, absorbed in thought, finally spoke out.

“I have not heard how he carved the moonlight”

“Did the patrons from the Royal Court not tell you about it?”

“Hmm, they always omitted it in their tale. They refused to tell me about it. They said Queen Evane of Rosenheim, O may her soul rest in peace, was involve in the event. Can you do me a favor and look into this, so that my curiosity shall be gratified?”

Ting

Quest: The Sculptor's Past:

The rumor has it that Queen Evane was involved in the event when the sculptor presented himself in the Royal Palace and carved the moonlight. The shopkeeper of the sculpture shop wondered what link existed between the two of them.

Difficulty Level:E

Warning:

If you are found to be investigating the rumor in question, you will be exposed to hostility from Royal Knights.

Weed's clenched fists were shaking in excitement. 'This, it's a serial quest!'

Even when the difficulty level of a quest is awfully low, the level of rewards shoot up in the case of serial quests. The more stages you complete, the more difficult the quest gradually becomes, and so most serial quests are likely to be highly difficult to solve for Weed at his current level.

The only quests that Weed could complete are the ones that are inside the Citadel, asking around and gathering information from people.

"I'm afraid that I am still incompetent. I believe that I may not be worthy of your request." Weed replied.

“I am certain you are up to this task. Your prudence shall lead the way to safety.” The shopkeeper replied.

“If you say so, I will take it willingly” Weed said.

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

“Thank you traveler. A bard with knowledge in ancient tales and street gossip is the one whom you should ask about Queen Evane. Beware! This matter is extremely sensitive, so you should not cause trouble that might lead to any defamation of the Royal Family.”

*

Keeping down a sudden impulse to hum a tune, Weed headed straight to a pub across the street.

“Good afternoon~!” Returning the greeting from a waitress, Weed looked around in search of a bard. There were a few conditions to meet. First, he discounted the bard users when he looked for the right man. It was a long shot that any user had even ever heard of such an event that had happened in the Royal Palace

half a century before. Weed would be better off to find a Serabourgian native, possibly an elderly.

Whether he could sing ballads favorably or not, an old bard was reliable when it comes to worldly gossip. Weed stopped by several pubs until he found a bard who lived up to his expectations. It was a middle-aged bard in his forties, experienced with both charm and youth. Clapping both hands, Weed approached the bard.

“Thank you for a fine ballad, sir. Forgive me for interrupting you, but I want to ask you a few questions... Do you know what happened fifty years ago in the Royal Court of Rosenheim?”

The bard’s thrust his palm out and Weed could not miss what this gesture implied. He frowned immediately, his mouth twitching with a grave sense of responsibility that he would not waste a penny.

“You sure have a charming voice. I appreciate your talent in writing both the lyrics and the music for that ballad. Also your skills in the instrument were more than impressive...”

“...”

“I bet you broke the hearts of many Serabourgian ladies back when you were a young ray of sunshine at the peak of your career. Of course, I do not doubt that you are still stealing ladies’ hearts... For a bard, adventure and romance is everything. I also love romance.”

The palm didn't go away, and the bard snapped, "I'm sick and tired of cheap compliments from the likes of you, foreigner. Show me the money, or get lost!"

Weed was momentarily lost.

"Do I just give up the quest in the middle? Anyway, the quest doesn't penalize me even if I decide to drop out. But maybe it would give me sweet rewards later, and I would hate to miss out on them" Weed thought to himself.

Weed's hand slipped into his pocket and fished out a coin before he realized his mistake. Two silvers! There were two silver coins in his pocket. That was everything that the instructor had given him as a retaining fee for the previous quest.

The bard seized the silver coin from Weed's palm.

It was a basic mistake that he had forgotten to exchange his money into smaller coins in advance.

'I can't believe I made such a silly mistake!' Weed's body shook in distress and grief.

"Hmph, this is a secret, so you must keep it to yourself!" The bard said under his breath

"Queen Evan and the sculptor had been on intimate terms since they were children."

“What do you mean by intimate terms...?” Weed asked

“You fool! I know nothing else for intimate terms between a man and a woman—they loved each other.”

“Point taken” Weed now realized why poking his nose into the rumor had to remain a secret from the Royal Court.

Given that if the former Queen’s sacred name was ever mentioned in that scandalous matter, the Royal Knights would probably be willing to silence anyone at any cost to keep her honor intact.

The bard glanced around the pub and added cautiously “They were both born and raised in the same village, and grew up bearing each other dearly in mind. The boy’s name was Zahab. The girl was always carrying ornaments carved and given by him. When she was a child she held a dream that she would become his wife someday, but Destiny played a nasty trick on them, and the girl was chosen to be the Royal Maid. At which point the boy left her. But in the end, there was still the promise between them.”

“What promise, if I may ask?” Weed asked, now curious.

“Zahab had promised to show the girl the most beautiful statue under heaven.”

“I guess it was not kept, then. The Queen must have a great

number of beautiful, magnificent statues in her place.”

“No, he kept it. Many years later, Zahab presented himself at the request to the Royal Court. It was said that, at the sight of his work, she was most touched, saying it was the most beautiful creature under heaven.”

“Then, what statute, for Freya’s sake, did he present to Queen Evane? A Queen doesn’t easily cherish an ordinary piece.”

“True. Pay a visit to the lady’s maid who witnessed that day, and hear the rest of the story from her. This is as far as I can tell you because I also heard it from someone else.”

“Is she still alive?”

“Yes.” The bard told Weed the way to the house of the lady’s maid.

Weed went to visit her. She had retired, and when he mentioned Queen Evane and the sculptor, she gave him a joyous welcome.

“Her Highness was very virtuous and gracious lady. So do you want to hear about what happened back then?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“You’ve found the right person to ask. I personally served Her

Highness. She at first resented Zahab-nim when he first visited the palace."

"Why so, if I may ask?"

"It was his promise. When they were young, they had made a promise, a promise that Zahab-nim would present Her Highness with the most beautiful statue under heaven. But when he appeared in the palace, he was carrying a sword, not an sculpting knife. To the eyes of everyone, he looked like a fine swordsman who was proficient in the sword. You should have seen how heartbroken Her Highness was. It was indescribable! Her Highness so believed in Zahab-nim that even if the world turned upside down, he would be the same eternally, and likewise, the promise between them was divine"

"..."

"On that day, Brent Kingdom, which bordered on Rosenheim, dispatched a band of assassins. They revealed their treacherous ambition to seize our Kingdom, and Freya only knows how shocked I was when assassins stormed in and assaulted Her and His Highness in the garden"

"Those wicked scoundrels!"

"Yes, young traveler, you can say that again. A couple of Royal Knights were trapped, thus incapable of holding them in check—and we were left to face death. At that very moment, Zahab-nim walked into the garden. As you can see, right in the middle of

fighting, Her Highness warned him and ordered him to leave. But Zahab-nim only smiled—”

“He smiled in the middle of such a dangerous situation?”

“—and he said he would show her the most beautiful statue that he had ever carved under heaven. To everyone’s surprise, the moonlight shattered into pieces at Zahab-nim’s sword. Its beauty was really striking. He was singing a song while he carved the moonlight. I cannot remember the lyrics word by word, but the title was A Sculptor’s Heart. Listening to the song, Her Highness was overflowing with tears. It was really the most beautiful statue Milady had ever seen. Had Zahab-nim only inscribed his name on a crude plank, but Her Highness would have taken it for the most beautiful sculpture in the world, but I tell you, the sight he was carving with the moonlight was literally heavenly. The assassins scattered at the inconceivable sight, and Zahab-nim kept his promise. Many years have since gone, but I still cherish that moving memory.”

Then, a mysterious flashback fluttered before Weed’s eyes.

*

Whittle

A boy is holding a tiny sculpting knife in his hands.

As the sculpting knife slides up and down, a piece of wood is

shaping into a form.

It seems he is carving a maiden.

A little, lovely maiden.

Through his craftsmanship, the piece of wood is endowed with life.

A girl, blushing up to her ears, is watching him.

The boy's hand moving the sculpting knife, and his serious look.

The girl loves him, and everything about him.

Soon the boy hands her the complete statue. It looks so much like the girl.

“For now, all I can do is carve a piece of wood. But someday, I will give you the most beautiful statue in the world.”

“Thank you Zahab. I'm looking forward to that day!”

The boy and girl made a promise with each other, hand in hand.

As the girl grows up, she blossoms into a rare beauty.

She caught the eyes of the King and She eventually became Queen. But the girl is not happy at all.

Her Highness is still unhappy the day Zahab comes back to see her.

Zahab carried a sword, and not the sculpting knife.

Talking a walk alone in the garden, Her Highness gives way to fit of passion and clutches a thorny rose. Her palm bleeds with ruby red blood.

“Why did you forget our promise? Your promise was everything to me...”

Her Highness grieved over the broken promise.

That evening, the assassins raid the palace.

Brent Kingdom, a hostile neighbor as always, has sent assassins.

Knights of Rosenheim Kingdom collapse one after another.

She and His Highness are fearful of their imminent and inevitable death.

Zahab clutches his sword, and the moonlight begins to dance.

*

Ting

Quest Completed: The Sculptor’s Past:

The promise between the boy and the girl was honored. The bluish moonlight shattered into pieces, which in turn defeated the assassins. Moonlight Sculptor Zahab— His Sculpture mastery has reached the stage of a Master. Presenting the most beautiful statue to his childhood friend.

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

To Weed’ surprise, two levels went up for a single quest, and that

wasn't the end of it. A message window popped up. To his surprise once again, it was a class conversion window.

Ting

Class Change: Moonlight Sculptor (Hidden):

You can convert to a secret class Moonlight Sculptor. If you accept it, you can learn exclusive skills for the class that are withheld from the primary classes.

Do you want to convert to Moonlight Sculptor?

Yes | No

An infinite number of users are bustling about to discover secret classes in Royal Road, but fewer than one out of a thousand actually discovers one.

Weed answered, “I refuse.”

Ting

Please confirm your decision. You can convert to a secret class Moonlight Sculptor.

Do you want to convert to Moonlight Sculptor?

Yes | No

“I refuse,” Weed answered again.

To Weed, being stuck in the corner of a closet and making unwanted statues wasn’t even worth considering. He had to admit that being a sculptor could make quite an amusing class if properly trained. But he needed a financially lucrative class for his personal gain. When Weed came to his senses, the old lady’s maid was watching.

“It was a wonderful story. Thank you very much for sharing it with me ma’am.”

“You’re welcome. It was my pleasure to tell their story like this. So, young adventurer, I want to give you a small present. Will you please take it?”

Wouldn’t it be unkind to reject a present out of goodwill? Weed was not so cruel as to decline anything offered to him. A man should accept any present with gratitude.

“I will gladly take it, ma’am.”

The old maid took something bundled up from deep inside a drawer. It resembled an ancient scalpel.

“This sculpting knife used to belong to Zahab-nim. He left it to Her Highness, and I happened to keep it now. And this wooden statue is carved by Zahab-nim. Please take these” The lady’s maid said.

“I shall long treasure your present.” Weed said.

He received two items from her.

Ting

You have received:

Item:Sculpting Knife

Item:Zahab's Legacy

Weed thought that these items were uncommon as they were left by one of the Masters of Sculptural Art. Even the wooden statue looked classy at a casual glance.

“Please keep Zahab-nim's sculpting knife and handle with great care.”

“Yes, ma'am.” Weed dutiful replied.

Weed calculated that these might sell well and turn over a good profit.

“The wooden statue will show you where Zahab-nim's resting place is located. I hope his sculpture mastery will not be buried forever.”

“I hope so too, ma'am”

“If only I could hear the song of that day again... Everything about sculpture mastery is concealed in that sculpting knife”

“Excuse me?”

“In Zahab-nim’s sculpting knife.”

That moment Weed looked at the sculpting knife. He had a gut feeling that an irresistible destiny was drawing near.

Ting

Quest: Follow Zahab’s Last Wish:

Zahab did not die that day. He left for a faraway continent to test his Sculpture Mastery. Once you graduate in Sculpture Master, you should find Zahab to learn the song A Sculpture’s Heart from him. Then, you should come back here and sing it to this old lady’s maid. The tradition runs that Zahab’s was last seen heading for the Gray Pass Region.

Difficulty:A

Quest requirement:

You must complete this quest before the old maid passes away.

Cancellation is not permitted.

Reward:

You can learn Item Identification Skill, Sculpture Mastery, Repair Skill, and Handicraft Skill.

A serial quest with a difficulty level of A, rewarding four skills. Weed couldn't tell if he was lucky or not.

For one thing, he knew that it was extremely difficult to acquire skills unrelated to his own class. Those skills, such as Item Identification and Repair Skill, which he had learned without converting to the sculpture class, could come in handy in numerous ways, but an A level quest was far beyond his ability for a long time, possibly many years.

The average level for Royal Road users is currently a hundred or so. The highest currently on the level ladder is in the low 300s. The difficulty of a quest that requires a balanced party of power rankers of about level 300 to finish is known to be B-level.

That means Weed had just accepted a quest that requires him to be above level 400 to be able to cope with the quest, let alone finish it.

As if it were not bad enough, the Gray Pass region is the most perilous of the perilous areas, inhabited by the most forceful monsters. It is one of the top Ten Forbidden Areas on the continent, where you are absolutely guaranteed to be chopped to pieces the moment you stepped into the area.

‘Dammit!’ Weed thought bitterly.

The number of quests that a user can store at any given time is only three. Now that one of them was taken by the quest: ‘Zahab’s Last Wish’, Weed was left with only two spaces for new quests.

But in case of serial quest, it is unpredictable what rewards await the user in the end. This serial quest introduced a secret class at the second stage. Even after he refused to convert to the class, he was given four practical skills. Imagine what rewards in the final stage would be like.

Weed wasn’t stupid to say no to a good opportunity. Yet, it remained unknown when and how this would work out.

He bid farewell to the old lady’s maid, and went back to the sculpture stop.

“Oh Weed-nim, I deeply appreciate your hard work to bring me results so soon. I am once again assured that it was the right decision to entrust you with this quest” The shopkeeper said.

The shopkeeper paid Weed as a reward for the request.

Weed received 2 silver coins, recovering the silver coin that had been virtually robbed by the bard.

When he returned to the Training Hall, he received another silver coin, along with a word of commendation from the instructor. Therefore, it was a total of 5 silvers that Weed had earned so far.

He also leveled up twice, to level 3. He distributed those earned stat bonus points equally to Agility and Strength.

“Why aren’t you taking on another quest?” he asked himself.

Weed wrestled with a sudden temptation, but picked up the wooden sword again. A quest that was undisclosed to the public similar to the quest he just undertook, was rare. That was why Weed earned generous rewards for his level.

Chapter 04: Dreadful Weed

The civilization of the Versailles Continent dawned approximately one million and eight thousand years ago. Back then, Humans, Elves, Dwarves and Orcs lived together.

Dwarf women with deft hands served as midwives to baby Orcs. Orcs in infancy were christened by elven women, and human women bathed them clean in water. The four races had lived together, each compensating for what the others were missing.

The elf rangers gathered fruit from trees, the dwarf crafters made tools, and human scouts hunted game along with the Orc warriors. As deadly monsters abound in the world, the weak had no choice but to rely on one another to survive.

Orcs, who were fully developed within two to three years, were fine warriors by nature. Born with unnatural strength and a battle instinct, they sustained the elves and humans.

The Orcs claimed the leadership of the four races both in name and reality as no other race could keep up with the fertility and combat skills of the Orcs.

However, when humans developed agricultural techniques, domesticating plants and animals, they took over the food supply chain, and gradually challenged the supremacy of the Orcs.

The elves, who learned elemental and spirit magic from their

alliance with Nature, became arrogant and began to distance themselves from the Orcs, who they branded ignorant.

The dwarves advanced metals technology day after day, which gave them a new generation of weaponry to brave the Orcs.

The alliance of the four races was dismantled after a series of numerous hostile disagreements and bouts of jealousy.

Eventually the humans built villages and then towns on rich soil, which later banded together to create kingdoms.

The elves moved into the Forest of No Return where the elements and spirits were magnified in effect, extending their domain over their magic widely.

The Orcs dispersed all over the wilderness and virgin soil, hunting the wild and distressing the civilized as they wished, enjoying combat without restraint.

The dwarves stayed holed up in the mountains, mining raw ore and refining their crafts.

Inevitably, the humans and Orcs argued over scarce food, and the elves and the dwarves loathed each other in a struggle to secure preeminence in the Natural world.

This is the history of the Versailles Continent, the forgotten myth of four races.

*

The rumor about the odd stranger ran like wildfire through the Citadel of Serabourg.

It was about a beast who had been swinging a wooden sword at a scarecrow wordlessly for four consecutive weeks in the Training Hall.

Bluster

Whack

Weed was swinging the wooden sword in silence. His strikes at the scarecrow showed no mercy. Every time the wooden sword sliced the scarecrow, a heavy sound exploded.

In the earlier days, he was content with barely grazing the scarecrow. As his strength and agility increased steadily, through, the wooden sword had been gathering force.

“Is he really a user?”

“Do you think he’s a real man? Slim chance.”

“Look at him. I bet he’s not.”

“Could it be an NPC?”

“Given his sudden appearance...”

“He could be an NPC connected to a quest!”

The eyes of some users began to glow with enthusiasm and a bunch of users offered food and money to win Weed’s favor, wondering if he was a quest NPC. Too proud to be treated as a beggar, Weed declined them, but they were persistent.

“Come on, please take this... ”

“Want something else? Just tell me. I’ll go find it.”

“Don’t you think a steel sword is definitely better than this wooden sword? I can give you a long sword, and it’ll come in handy.”

They trailed after Weed in the hope that he might introduce them to a special quest. They didn’t know it for certain, though, because Weed repeatedly denied being an NPC, and shooed them away, saying they were disturbing his training. Oddly, this rather strengthened their conviction.

“He’s not accepting any gift.”

“Who can hit the scarecrow not only one or two days, but for four weeks in a row?”

“And he’s a big friend of the instructor...!”

The instructor, who had always looked down upon users as a nuisance, was nice to Weed, going so far as sharing lunch with him every day. To the public, Weed didn’t look like a human.

The only way to tell users from NPCs is when they come out with their identity. This was why Weed caused misunderstanding in other users.

Several high level users saw through Weed’s intentions to improve strength and other stats. They came near and were nice to him. They approached him on purpose, knowing full well he was a user.

“If you join my clan, we will support you to save your disappointment.”

“We will sponsor you until you hit level one hundred. Nothing spared.”

Royal Road has a concept of clans or guilds like other online games, but there is a bigger picture.

Emperor!

The objective of every clan with high-level rankers is to enthrone an Emperor in their midst—to found their own empire on the Versailles Continent, and rule over all creation.

With taxes collected monthly, feudal lords and monarchs can build essential facilities such as granaries and blacksmiths' workshops in towns under their supervision, or throw in money to enlist recruits and train them well.

Given a ruler who administers to the affairs of state, develops the economy and advance technology one can become very powerful. Technological innovation leads to better weaponry produced by blacksmiths, and the size of a city depends on its public security and sanitation.

In laying down national and regional policies and setting up diplomatic ties with other countries, the king on the top of a pyramid-like society exercises greater authority than anyone else.

Kings encourage cities and fortresses to expand in their domain, drawing more immigrants who become subject to their rule. Besides internal affairs, there is war.

If and when someone declares war, the armies called up by ambitious Kings engage in battle with each other under the command of generals.

Layman users in the position of subjects demand that their user kings are wise and just. Therefore, the cities where they reside will

grow more prosperous, and trade of goods will be more dynamic, which stimulates the users to aspire for success in the game.

Still, Weed declined all the clan offers.

Ting

Strength has risen by 1 point (+1 STR)

Agility has risen by 1 point (+1 AGI)

Vitality has risen by 1 point (+1 VIT)

Fame has risen by 20 points (+20 FAME)

Health has risen by 100 points (+100 HP)

The wooden sword had not shown any sign of pausing suddenly stopped in mid-air. Then Weed closed his eyes.

“I’ve finally made it.” Weed sighed deeply with relief.

For four weeks, according to the game's time flow, Weed had improved the stats as much as he could in the Training Hall. To his surprise, he earned a little fame— never hurts to have some fame.

The more fame you have, the cheaper you can buy goods from grocery stores or blacksmith's workshops, and you can get more respect in talking or negotiating with NPCs.

The instructor, who had been watching him pleasantly at a distance, walked up to Weed and said,

“Good job, Weed-nim.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“I didn't expect you would come so far. Yet you overcame my prejudice. I am very proud of you.”

“I'm indebted to your teaching, Honorable Instructor.”

“Haha! You're absolutely right.” The instructor laughed heartily.

Weed knew from experience how high a simple word could lift up the instructor.

The instructor handed a sword to Weed.

Ting

Item: Hard Iron Sword.

“What’s this sword...?”

“It is yours. This sword is awarded to a man who completes the basic training program.”

“Basic training...”

A question suddenly occurred to Weed.

He had learned by accident that he could improve stats by swinging a wooden sword at a scarecrow in the Training Hall.

While combing through online game communities, he had read a posting about it in a forum run by a couple of small-size clans.

Therefore, he had focused on bringing up his stats as much as possible in the Training Hall before he began seriously.

Weed had good reason for it, though he conceded that it might

sound inefficient to invest four weeks to improve his stats slowly one by one.

As far as other users were concerned, they would rather waste less time to acquire an item that boosted stats so little.

‘Still,’ Weed thought, ‘it isn’t the same as training hard to strengthen the bottom line stats of one’s avatar. It makes a difference, a big one.’

As good luck would have it, you might pick up a good item during a journey, but your original stats will always be the same, regardless of whatever items you are equipped with. Suppose you rise forty points in strength, and imagine what it will be like when you wear a +50 STR necklace.

The stats that Weed had drilled in the Training Hall would help him right up to the last minute of the game play.

Weed pondered the meaning of the instructor’s remark and finally asked, “Do you know how many people completed the basic training by now?”

“16 here,” the instructor answered immediately.

He added,

“The Continent is vast, Weed-nim. I think there are a total of 3,800 hundred foreigners who finished the basic training program

in all the Training Halls. To the best of my knowledge, nobody has finished the basic training as fast as you did.”

3,800 people! Weed’s eyes flashed fire.

“They are my potential rivals”

His next question broke a brief moment of silence.

“You said this is basic training. Do you provide a higher level of training program?”

“I don’t, but there are other places.”

“Where are they?”

“I do not know where they are located. I heard they were open only to those who were destined to find them. You must finish a basic level to be qualified for the next level of training.”

“Thank you for the information, Honorable Instructor.”

“Don’t mention it.”

Weed was now done with the Training Hall. When he turned to leave, the instructor called to him.

“Weed-nim, do you have a plan?”

“Excuse me, sir?”

“An expeditionary force is scheduled to depart for the Lair of Litvart a week from now. A colleague of mine is the commander of the force. His name is Midvale. If you do not have anything better to do right now, why don’t you lend your sword to him?”

Ting

Quest: A Clean-up Operation in the Lair of Litvart:

Rosenheim Kingdom has been greatly suffering from the monsters, which have risen in number for the last decade. King Theodarren, righteous and benevolent ruler of Rosenheim, issued a royal decree to order a distinguished knight, Sir Midvale, to explore the Lair of Litvart and root out monsters. Eradicate the monsters in the Lair of Litvart with Sir Midvale and his soldiers.

Difficulty: E

Quest requirement:

Failed if you are killed.

The instructor's proposal was a mission that any other user would rush to accept gladly. The Rosenheim Royal Army abounds in well-organized, hard-trained soldiers. The average level for infantrymen is almost thirty, and a knight's level surpasses 150 generally speaking.

In particular, those knights with their own name among the ranks are revered as Titled Knights. Their levels lie between levels 180-220. This size of force can clear away any lair without complication. The Lair of Litvart is not at all likely to be an exception.

According to Weed's research, the Lair of Litvart was infested by kobolds at levels in the twenties and goblins in the 50s.

All Weed needed to do after he joined the force on the mission was to stay alive, whether he actively took part in a battle or not. It was a golden opportunity that was offered to him out of the instructor's goodwill. But Weed shook his head.

"I am sorry, sir."

Ting

You have declined the quest!

“No way. What is troubling you, Weed-nim...?”

“It is nothing. I just don’t have a class yet.”

“Oh my Freya... you’re right! I’ve acted too rashly. Visit me any time you please. I will let you know if I can recommend a quest that is suitable to you.”

The instructor had not only reached level two hundred, but also kept in contact with the soldiers who were trained by him. In other words, he had established his own network in the Royal Army.

Still, the instructor’s relatively humble position prevented it being tracked by high-ranking officials.

Suddenly, the instructor asked in a low voice,

“Weed-nim, have you chosen what class you want to convert to?”

“I am yet to decide. I have to go to the intelligence guild, and see what class they recommend.”

The intelligence guild gives counsel to users, depending on their stats and skills.

In the early stage, most users walk a similar path, so the intelligence guild classifies them into two groups—combat classes (melee and supportive) and craft classes, including merchants.

On rare occasions, the guild unveils hidden classes. Very rare, indeed.

“I am telling you this only because you are... a trustworthy man who refused the opportunity to convert to such a trashy class as sculptor. Tell me honestly, Weed-nim—do you regret not having taken up the sculpting knife?”

“No way, sir! Sculptor, I won’t take it no matter what.”

“Humph, I have never told this to anyone else... you’re the first man. Come closer.”

The instructor’s voice dropped to a quiet murmur. He spoke in a whisper close to Weed’s ear. Weed got goose bumps when the Orc-like instructor’s breath brushed over his face, but he kept his disgust in check.

“You are looking for a fine class. I will show you the way. Have you heard of Rodriguez the Sage?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Go visit him. Praised as the Star of Wisdom, he is revered as a being knowledgeable in all things. He will tell you what profession suits you best, much better than a mere intelligence guild. But...”

“...?”

“The catch is the Counselor is a queer fish. Worse enough, you never know where he will hop next. He’s ill-natured, naughty and narrow-minded.”

“ ... ”

“You can’t see him in person in the usual way. He will not bother listening to you in the first place. But if you give this to him, he will do you a favor, only once.”

Ting

You have received:

Item:Queen Evane’s Handkerchief

“Thank you, Honorable Instructor.”

“Not at all. I feel rather responsible for your decision because I can’t deny that many sword warriors fare worse than moonlight sculptors. I pray to Freya that you will get a fine class. Beware of Counselor Rodriguez. He knows no shame, so you should not tell him what you want until he speaks to you.”

When Weed made his farewells to the instructor on the way out of the Training Hall, a towering man approached him.

The giant’s name was Python, a fearless warrior with a gigantic sword.

“Are you leaving now?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm, where are you going?”

“I’ll first find a class, and then I’ll work hard to raise my level.”

“I’m sure you will make it to the top very fast. I haven’t seen anyone as steadfast as you in online games! Though I’m proud of how tough I am, you are literally a man of steel.”

Python was a warrior at level 288.

He had learned a new skill, so he had come to the Training Hall

to experiment with it.

When he arrived at the hall, it was crowded with a flood of users, all of whom had gathered to observe Weed.

Python was also a man of curiosity.

Some people got Weed mixed up with an NPC, but when Python, squeezed by the crowd, overheard that a user could improve stats in the Training Hall, he had started whacking the scarecrow right next to Weed.

The force that was released from Python's massive figure had been shocking.

With a few more users who had participated in the show, Python had unintentionally diverted public attention from Weed.

For the last week, Python was the only user who Weed had spoken to so far.

“Thank you for your compliment.”

“Anyway, I'm looking forward to it! The day we run across each other. You won't disappoint me, will you?”

“You'll be disappointed.”

“Huh?”

“With your weakness, I’m far tougher than you can imagine.”

“Fahahahaha.”

Python laughed aloud. As his level was in the high 280s, he ranked among the strongest and was treated with respect everywhere he went. He was intrigued by Weed, who could make cutting remarks to the powerful.

Python’s eyes narrowed a little more seriously.

“I’ll be really looking forward to it.”

“Take care.”

Weed said goodbye to him, and headed to the manor of Rodriguez the Sage.

“Rodriguez the Sage, the Star of Wisdom, is omnipotent in knowledge. He will give me guidance as to what class I should get,” he told himself.

*

The manor of Counselor Rodriguez was located in the northern

section of the Citadel of Serabourg, and soldiers were on the watch, circling the manor.

As soon as Weed walked close to the gate, two soldiers called out for him to stop.

“Halt! What’s your business here, stranger?”

“I am here to visit the Counselor. I have something for him from the instructor in the Training Hall who entrusted me with it.”

“It’s too bad. I understand you have business to be taken care of, but the Counselor does not expect anyone with such little fame,” the soldier answered in a matter-of-fact tone.

“But I have an article the instructor asked me to deliver to the Counselor in person.”

“It is none of my business. Do you think you are allowed to visit His Lordship just because you have something for him?”

“...”

In short, it requires an impressive reputation, or comparable fame, to pay a visit to Kings or nobles and Weed’s fame was only 20, far too low to enter the Counselor’s manor.

“I personally know the instructor in the Training Hall very well.

He once trained me with his own hands. Still, I can't permit your entry to the manor."

"If you insist on that, am I allowed to stay here as long as I don't enter the manor?"

The guards were perplexed by Weed's question. "Make yourself clear, traveler."

"I'm asking if you mind if I just sit down on the street and wait for the sage to come out?"

"Not at all." The soldier added indifferently, "The Street is open to everyone."

Weed nodded slightly.

"Thank you for your permission."

"Not at all. But..."

"Beg your pardon?"

"I'm telling you this because you're an acquaintance of the instructor – the Counselor often locks himself in the manor for a week or so. Especially when an unwelcome visitor knocks on the door, he will definitely keep it shut. Are you still willing to wait for him?"

Liu Bei visited Zhuge Liang three times to recruit him, and he turned out to be the cornerstone in founding a new dynasty in south-western China. Reminded of the famous episode, Weed nodded.

“Yup.”

Weed squatted across from the manor, anticipating the Counselor would emerge any second. He sometimes chatted with the guards, and quickly learned that the instructor was well respected among the lower ranks.

“A man who had once dreamed of knighthood, he is now fully qualified for one.”

Meanwhile, the night deepened and the Sage’s manor darkened.

“I’d be a liar if I said I expected to get what I want on the first day. He can’t hide inside forever.” Weed muttered to himself

Weed found it futile to mount guard over the manor because the Counselor was asleep. He withdrew from there and headed for the gate.

A moonlit night intensifies the brutality of monsters on the Versailles Continent. They get stronger by half, and yield an extra thirty percent of EXPs. This provokes a heightened attention from users to avert the risk of death.

That night marked Weed's first adventure away from the Citadel. On a wide-open field a bunch of users ran after foxes, rabbits and raccoons, a scene created by newbies, whom Weed would soon join.

“So I have something I can use as a weapon...?”

He took out the iron sword given by the instructor, and held it tight.

“Item Check: Hard Iron Sword”

Item: Hard Iron Sword:

Durability:54/54

Damage:10-14

Awarded to those who've completed the Basic Training Program. This widely-used long sword is better than basic type weapons that are available in a blacksmith's workshop.

Requirement:

Strength 40+

Vitality 35+

Equipped:

+10 Strength

The sword given by the instructor was one of the finest available to Weed. He swung it a few times, realized that its balance was ideal, and felt comfortable with it. Weed checked the other weapon.

“Item Check: Sculpting Knife Stat”

Item: Zahab’s Sculpting Knife:

Durability:984/1000

Damage:40-54

A short tiny sculpting knife, specifically built for delicate workmanship. This knife is very sharp.

Equipped:

Increases your chances of scoring a critical hit.

The sculpting knife dealt more damage than the hard iron sword, but Weed chose the latter. For one thing, it was longer, thus reaching farther. With the sculpting knife, he felt it tricky to work on the enemy. The hard iron sword was more useful in terms of slaying monsters.

Moreover, the sculpting knife didn't wear down easily, thanks to its high durability. This advantage transferred to Weed, who had obtained the repair skill, and the hard steel sword provided more opportunities to sharpen the repair skill because it was comparatively fragile, requiring frequent maintenance.

“Great. I guess I'm ready to go.” Weed swung his iron sword about. “Raccoons, foxes, wolves, bring it on. I'll take all of you down.”

The moment he went out hunting—

“Excuse me.” Someone spoke to Weed, who was walking in silence.

“Are you alone?” Weed turned around. He saw a cute-looking girl right in front of him. She wore a cotton hat and bluish leather armor.

“A girl.” he said to himself.

“Yes, It’s only me.” Weed lowered his tone.

“Do you want to join us for a hunting mission? We’ve got a mage, a cleric, an archer and a monk.”

Weed looked over her shoulder before he answered. There were two girls in robes and a man who he guessed was a ranger. Once he sized them up, he figured out why they had asked a stranger to join their party.

Those users were all ‘squishies’ wearing clothes and leather armor, limited to long-range attacks, so they needed a missing piece—a tanker who would provide protection for them.

It’s not a bad deal. It’s my first battle, and it’s probably better to start off in a party. Always better safe than sorry, he thought.

Weed readily consented,

“Sounds good to me.”

“Thank you.”

Weed quickly joined the party.

“Nice to see you. I am Irene, level 7 priestess. I specialize in healing and divine power protection expertise.”

“I’m a level 6 mage, name’s Romuna. Mainly deal with the element of Fire.

The two girls introduced themselves first, and then it was the man’s turn. He studied Weed’s face with curiosity before he spoke.

”I’m Pale, level 6 archer. You have balls, man, going solo on night hunting like that.”

“Hehe, I’m Surka, level 7 monk.”

They told him their names and levels, and now it was Weed’s turn.

“Name’s Weed. Level 3.”

“ ... ”

A quiet shock swept over the others.

Pale plucked up courage and asked,

“And what’re you equipped with?”

“All I’ve got is this sword.”

“...”

Down to the last dust in his pocket, Weed only had five silvers. Fine leather armor, other than disposables, cost thirty silvers.

Weed had not bothered with ordinary quests, so he didn’t even have enough money to purchase leather armor.

“And your class is...?”

“Undecided,”

Weed answered, shaking his head dubiously. He sensed something wasn’t quite right, though he could not pinpoint why.

“Gosh!” Pale finally sucked in a breath. He looked completely lost.

“I guess it’s up to you to take your time deciding what the best

class is for you... By the way, it looked like you were hunting alone. Is it your first time out here?”

“Yes, I’m new to the virtual reality game.”

“I see. Why am I not surprised to hear that?”

At Weed’s frank response, Irene and Romuna looked at Surka with scolding eyes. Their looks said that she had picked the wrong guy.

Level 3, class: Undecided.

As if that were not bad enough, this shabby-looking kid was a newbie in virtual reality.

Lack of experience usually proves fatal when confronted by a monster in your first battle. You simply lose your calm, lose your reason, and then lose your life, in that order.

They were aware of this because they had been through their share of newbie-hood.

These animals, though tailored for beginners within reach of the Citadel, are still comparatively fierce and mighty. Quite a challenge for a single player.

“Whew... I think we’re kind of in trouble.”

Pale didn't know what to say and made an evasive smile. Weed decided to talk straight in order to save everyone from discomfort.

"I'll leave the party if you think I'll do more harm than good."

"I'm sorry."

Surka acknowledged her mistake and bowed to Weed apologetically. At the second look, she saw he was wearing basic GIs.

"I thought he was strong because he had that iron sword. Geez, where did he get that sword? It looks awfully good..." She said to herself.

Weed broke away from the party and headed to the field alone. Pale and Surka felt guilty having disowned him.

"What should we do now? Look for a replacement?"

Replacements were everywhere. The only commodity that was long on supply on the Versailles Continent was users, and monsters were short in supply.

"Look, we already shook hands with him."

"If we fight as a team, it'll work out, right?"

“I guess so, but...”

“Let’s give it a try.”

They caught up with Weed. He was busy staring at a bunch of rabbits and raccoons that were hopping about. He was ignorant of monsters in general, how much damage they could inflict and what pattern they would use to attack.

Pale asked, “Excuse me, if you’re still interested, we want you to join us.”

“I have a low level. If you’re okay with it, I want to play with you guys,” Weed said cautiously.

“Well, we’re cool. We are now a team. You don’t need to exert yourself on the front, and if you feel like it, you can stay behind us.”

Pale suggested Weed take cover instead of taking an active role in hunting. In their eyes, he was no more than a pure newbie.

“Are you sure about it?”

“Yes. You can’t collect as much experience as you are actually bringing your party down when you’re making less contribution, but your priority at this point is raising your level. Listen, level

three to level six makes a lot of difference, even though they're only three levels apart. If you're at level three and add all stat bonus points in strength, you'll get twenty-five. I have forty. Add to it ten bonus points in the course of converting to a class, and the gap between you and me widens dramatically."

"..."

Pale omitted this, but additional rewards in accordance with a user's class were more noticeable.

For instance, take an archer wielding a sword and a sword warrior wielding a sword, the sword warrior can inflict twice the damage as an archer wielding a sword. On the other hand, his arrow will make less than half the damage dealt by the archer. It was, to say the least, a disappointment to the others that Weed was freelance.

"Now, stay behind and watch us take down mobs for now, Weed-nim. When you find room to spare, get in, have a go and leave. It will help us if you just confuse mobs, divert their agro elsewhere."

Weed nodded. "I see."

The confusion was settled, and Weed decided to join their party and hunt monsters together. It was a pickup group designed to handle dull beasts around the Citadel, and his teammates had already been engaged in pick-and-roll without him. The thing is, though, that they had realized it was too risky that only Surka, a monk whose agility in dodging attacks compensated for a low

defense level, had tanked on the frontline. That was why they had been searching for a tanker.

*

“Damn it.”

Ahn Hyundo, successor of Bonkuk Kumdo, one of the oldest traditional schools for swordsmanship in Korea, pursed his lips in dissatisfaction. In the dojang, hundreds of teenagers and adults were practicing Kumdo, yelling battle cries, or kihap, in the language of Bonkuk Kumdo.

“Yatz!”

“Yatz!”

Ahn Hyundo could hear erupting kihaps and the whistling sounds generated by swords in action.

Once you master swordsmanship, a sound gives you a clue as to which stage a Kumdo practitioner is in.

Ahn Hyundo was ranked the best Kumdo master, and was recognized worldwide, four-time World Champion of Swordsmanship.

As Ahn Hyundo matured in age, he retreated to his own dojang

and dedicated his time and energy to training the next generation of Kumdo practitioners, but his hand and body had never left the sword, even for a second.

“I haven’t seen anyone with the guts. I should have trained that kid properly when he was around. He’s got something, something that could transcend my talent. Plus he’s got the guts and balls...”

Ahn Hyundo used to be satisfied that he had quite a number of competent apprentices. They had enough talent to qualify for a medal in the World Championship of Swordsmanship that was held every five years.

One day, however, the grand master’s perception had been turned upside down.

*

A year ago.

A man of about twenty years of age visited Ahn Hyundo’s dojang.

“Hello, I am Lee Hyun. I’ve come here because they recommended this is the best dojang.”

“Son, you handled a sword before?”

“No, sir. That’s why I’m here to learn it.”

“True. You must learn it. Learn and learn until you have an understanding of the big picture of swordsmanship, then we may talk about who’s the best.”

Ahn Hyundo believed it was the end of it, and forgot about the kid for a while. Then one morning, he saw Lee Hyun swinging a sword in a shower of sunlight.

Lee Hyun swung the sword for hours. His movement synchronized with his breathing patterns, and his sword emitted a beautiful sound. He had already reached a stage beyond what a beginner could achieve in a few months.

Ahn Hyundo summoned his subordinate instructors and asked them about Lee Hyun, who turned out to be devoted to ceaseless drills.

“Speaking of that apprentice, he’s got the bug. I haven’t seen anyone who’s more obsessed with training than him.”

“How obsessed is the kid?”

“Once he picks up a sword, he never lets it go, unless we pull it from his hands.”

“You have to pull the sword from his hands to stop him?”

“Yes, master. If we leave him alone, he will swing the sword hard until he’s completely out of breath. The first day he joined the dojang, he kept swinging the sword even when his palms had been shredded and were bleeding.”

“He went so far...”

“Yes, master. Exactly the same thing occurred on the second day. He trained in sword techniques while bleeding until callus formed, his grip was firm, and his palms were as hard as a rock. So it’s not surprising that he reached this level so fast.”

“He’s amazing!”

Ahn Hyundo had already chosen Lee Hyun to be his successor without telling him so.

Talent and hard work. The apprentice had both virtues, and what really captured the master’s mind were his eyes. When Ahn Hyundo instructed his would-be successor to a duel, his eyes glowed with something distinctive.

It was the will to fight, which an ordinary man whose instinct had been emasculated by civilization could not muster. This was found in Lee Hyun.

It was still a time of trial for him. Ahn Hyundo also believed that it was still too early to tell his plans to Lee Hyun, which might jeopardize his progress. Therefore, the master had treated his

apprentice rather indifferently, motivating him with plenty of objectives and watching his progress from a distance.

Then, one day, Lee Hyun stopped checking in at the dojang.

*

-Back to now-

“Whew.”

Ahn Hyundo’s sigh deepened.

“I wonder what he’s been doing. I should have made him my successor when I could.”

*

Taking cover behind Pale, Weed was watching the battle from a safe place.

“Irene, help me!”

“Roger! Fire ball!” Romuna chimed in.

“Divine power leads us to a triumph, Blessing!””

While Surka the monk was attacking a fox head-on, Romuna, Pale and Irene attacked at the fox from behind.

They adopted this strategy because Surka's level was seven, the highest among them, and the rest were squishes with relatively low life and defense.

The fox moved swiftly from one place to another. It dodged Surka's fist with little damage, and the tail attacks when it suddenly spun around were sometimes critical enough to make her back away.

With little stamina left, Surka often found herself at the risk of immobilization. Then, Irene would give her rapid healing to replenish her life and stamina while the others attacked the fox to take the aggro away from her.

They're not bad.

The quartet's teamwork was emphatic.

They neither lusted for cheap items, nor became worked up over small things. It appeared to him that the chemistry among his teammates had built up over time. Perhaps they had teamed up in another online game before they migrated to Royal Road.

Still, they had to ratchet up the tension while hunting a fox at level five.

Raccoons and rabbits were easy game, which Surka could handle alone. But a fox was tough, to put it mildly.

Weed easily grasped that this party focused on foxes in their hunting spree. He watched the ongoing battle for a while-until he thought he had seen enough of it.

His sharp eyes analyzed the patterns in movement of the foxes and Surka.

‘It’s easier than I thought.’

They outnumbered their enemy by four to one. The way a fox moved was slow and predictable as far as he could see. He watched it until he gained enough confidence. Then, he held the iron sword and left the cover.

Surka smiled at Weed who was coming up to her side.

“Watch out, Weed-nim.”

“Yup.” His response was very short.

The monster on their radar was once again a fox.

“I’m going to attract her attention first Weed-nim, you attack later. Like when it’s almost dead.”

Surka punched the fox, which jumped on her in a reflex action. Romuna, Pale and Irene rained projectiles, both physical and magical, on to their victim.

When the fox's life dropped to one third, Weed slid in.

He had little experience of battles previously in virtual reality games, but he was acquainted with real sword fights through hundreds of duels. Plus, he had struck the scarecrow tens of thousand times.

The iron sword drew a shiny-white trace in the air in a fraction of second. At the end of the gaudy semi-circle was the fox.

Weed had timed the attack so precisely that the fox could not even try to dodge it.

Ting

CRITICAL HIT!

A message window that was visible only to Weed popped up. Critical hit!

That only appeared when the damage was doubled as a result of an effective attack, the outcome of exquisite timing.

Glint

The fox was cut in half, and disappeared in a flash. It dropped two items. A fox pelt and meat.

You can turn meat to steaks by cooking on a bonfire, and fox pelt is one of the most widely used materials for clothes. This kind of production process requires related skills. Newbies rarely learn such skills as cooking and tailoring. It is more often than not that these items are destined to end up on a shelf in the nearest grocery store.

“Great move! You were lucky this time.”

Grinning, Surka collected the items.

Pale and Romuna, who had been casting the most powerful spells in case of a counterattack, were delighted by their new teammate's success.

“Weed-nim, we'll distribute items among us when the hunting mission's over.”

“Alright.”

“Then, I’ll go lure another fox. Everyone, get ready.”

“Okay. Bring a fox full of items again.”

“Shoot. Wish it were up to me.” grumbled Surka comically.

She dealt a punch to a fox that was wandering by, and attracted it closer.

“Fireball!”

“Blessing. Healing Hand!”

Surka put up a tough fight as the fox was moving swiftly. Pale and Romuna pressured the fox persistently.

Weed’s iron sword began to move when the fox had forty percent of life remaining. The sword slid out of the sheath and struck the fox like lightning.

Swish

As luck would have it, the fox didn’t drop any item this time, not that items dropped by ordinary foxes were of any great value.

For the third fox, the sword went into action with fifty percent of

its life remaining.

A critical hit didn't burst this time, so the fox survived Weed's first strike. It was followed by a sequence attack that flowed like liquid. The slain fox left only one item.

“What?”

“It seems strange.”

“We're hunting foxes faster.”

“When Weed attacks them, they almost always die.”

A few foxes later, his other teammates detected the pattern.

Since Weed had joined the party, the pace at which they were hunting foxes had picked up. As soon as he pulled out his iron sword, foxes were helplessly slaughtered. They disappeared in a gray flash the moment Weed brandished the sword.

“What in the world!”

Pale's mouth dropped open, planning to stay there for some time. For Weed slew foxes so fast, Surka was busy drawing new ones from far away.

Even if Pale didn't bother shooting arrows, the pace of hunting hardly slowed down. This apparently inexplicable situation in the eyes of everyone else in his party was attributed to Weed's stats.

Initially, Weed had been given ten points in strength at the activation of his account, plus forty points that he had obtained from the Training Hall. He had invested stat bonus points acquired by the two level-ups equally in strength and agility. As a result, his strength and agility were both fifty-five, and stamina fifty.

Moreover, Weed enjoyed ten points in strength from the iron sword he was equipped with. To achieve this level of strength solely by raising your level, you need to hit level eleven as you invest fully in strength.

More remarkably, Weed's agility, stamina, willpower and vitality were way beyond his current level. It needs at least eight to nine extra level-ups to improve so much.

Weed, level three, rivaled an average level 30 warrior.

A more surprising fact was that he had advanced sword mastery to level four while striking the scarecrow. It translated into forty percent more damage dealt to the enemy.

Weed's current level in sword mastery was four plus 98 percent. Once it reached level five, the effect on attack power would increase to fifty percent. Last but not least, the iron sword that the instructor had given Weed was a sort of high-powered luxury compared to his level. To sum it up, a fox was no match for Weed.

‘That sword must be a unique item.’ Pale immediately became suspicious. Otherwise, they could not come up with a proper explanation for Weed’s uncommon strength. They were still newbies, so they could not see how Weed knew how to come in at the right moment.

In battles in virtual reality online games, as they are based on real-time movements, a martial art maniac is obviously better positioned than a klutz.

Weed utilized the sword techniques that he had trained for during the whole year, down to trivial-looking footwork, which was invisible to the untrained eye. They simply believed that his sword was superb.

“Great.”

Excited, Surka lured foxes one by one.

Weed held the iron sword tight. He was in high spirits because the sword techniques he had examined and learned were proving productive.

“I didn’t waste the year. Now to deal with these pests!” he cried to himself.

Ting

CRITICAL HIT!

Many of Weed's attacks were deemed critical. He predicted where the fox would move, and executed his attack exactly where it went. His yearlong training that demanded sweat and blood was bearing fruit.

“Yatz! Yatz!” These brisk battle cries came from his mouth. He was immersed in his own fight, keeping eye contact with the foxes and swinging the sword mercilessly.

Irene and Romuna giggled at the comical sight of Weed acting and looking so serious. Suddenly, the fox's paw scratched him on the chest.

“Healing Hand!”

Weed's torso flashed in white. Then he realized that, even before he received the divine power, the gauge of his life dropped minimally.

‘Maybe...’ he pondered.

Weed called out to Surka, who was running to draw another fox,

“Surka-nim”

“Yes, Weed-nim?”

“What’s your life?”

“It’s 150. Why?”

“Oh, nothing. I’m just curious.”

A fox could give a maximum damage of 15. Defenseless, Weed had to absorb the full damage, but his life was over seven hundred.

“Okay, Surka-nim. How about I do the tanking for now?”

“Are you sure it’s okay?”

“Yup. So, you keep drawing foxes. Romuna-nim and Irene can’t move far away because their stamina runs out quickly. Pale-nim, can you shoot at foxes in the distance to lure them over here?”

In a short time, Weed had assumed the role of leader of the party.

“Of course.”

“Then, Pale-nim, please help Surka-nim bring foxes here.”

Weed moved wildly. When Surka ran back, taking damage from a fox, he quickly took care of it. Those foxes drawn by Pale’s arrows fell immediately by his sword, only to vanish in a gray flash. Weed hit level 4. He decided to invest every stat bonus points in agility.

The higher the agility is, the more easy it is to dodge an enemy attack and more likely you are to hit the enemy. It is directly related to evasion and accuracy.

The iron sword in Weed’s possession was marvelous for a novice, providing extra leverage in strength. So he boldly invested 5 points in agility, instead of strengthening his avatar.

The hunting spree continued. Excited by the fast pace, Romuna and Irene could not believe their luck. They had never experienced such fantastic hunting.

“Surka, bring more foxes here.”

“Exactly. Just leave everything else to us. You can concentrate entirely on the bait.”

“Okay, Unni.”

(PR: ‘Unni’ Is A Korean term that means older/big sister)

Surka was busy drawing foxes to them. So was Pale.

If Weed had hunted by himself, he would have to roam in search of target monsters and often take a rest to replenish his stamina when it ran out. Instead, his party provided bait and a priest for him, which unarguably quickened the pace of hunting.

It's not like a solo playing.

Back when Weed played The Continent of Magick, he had always been surrounded by monsters.

Weed used to walk in a dungeon populated by monsters and fight them as he pleased. He had logged on days and nights until he finally ran out of potions and herbs.

The inventory had been saddled with so many items that it interfered with his movement. Monsters had surprised him everywhere. Weed had fought on in a circle of monsters.

He had killed so many, and in return, been killed as many times.

Weed felt that a group game was far from the way he used to play. It was more effective, and he was having more fun. Their strategy soon backfired.

“Kyah!”

Surka made a deadly mistake. When she tried to bait a fox, she unintentionally caught a wolf's attention.

While trying to run away, Surka screamed, "Run away, everyone!"

Growl

The wolf was chasing after Surka on four legs. Its monstrous muzzle dripped saliva.

While the rest faltered, Surka was constantly assaulted by the wolf. It was faster than a fox, easily gaining on her. It looked hopeless.

"I'll rescue her. You should all run away. By the power of the Holy Spirit, restore her health. Healing Hand!"

Irene the priestess rejected the impulse to run for her life, and cast the Healing Hand over and over to refill Surka's diminishing life.

"Damn it!"

After a moment's indecision, Pale began shooting arrows at the wolf.

One, two, three shots. As soon as he loaded an arrow on his bow,

he shot it. The multiple shots, his signature skill, flew at the wolf, but it hardly flinched.

Now that the wolf had registered the entire party as its enemy, it would eventually attack Irene and Pale after it had finished off Surka.

Then, what would Weed do? He held the iron sword and stepped forward.

Can I make it? Why not! At first sight, the wolf's teeth and claws looked threatening.

Weed had bet that the wolf would throw its heavy weight on him and, rather than clawing, bite him in a crazed fashion.

"You'd better deal with me before anyone else," Weed said, standing in the wolf's way.

Weed didn't expect the wolf to understand what he had said, but as if it knew from instinct that the deadliest enemy had just appeared, it turned its eyes on him.

Growl

The wolf leapt off the ground, straight at Weed.

Weed rolled to one side swiftly, out of the path where the wolf

was charging, and swung the sword. Its teeth nearly slit his throat.

That scratch alone slashed 80 points of his life.

“Weed-nim, run away! My mana ran out, so I can’t help you with Healing Hand,” Irene shouted.

“Shoot. What kind of priestess doesn’t know how to manage her mana?” he said to himself.

Since Irene was fully assigned to healing, she should have always reserved a sufficient amount of mana in case of emergency. If not, someone could end up lying dead, or in the worst scenario, the entire party would face annihilation.

Weed had believed Irene must have had something up her sleeve when she volunteered to come to Surka’s rescue. To his dismay though, all that she, a priestess by nature, had was heart.

The current predicament didn’t give Weed any time to blame her. The wolf was growling at him.

After a few flames from Romuna, no more reinforcing magical power came flying from behind. Apparently, she had run out of mana.

Only Pale was left shooting arrows from a distance. The wolf got bloody, yet Pale’s futile attempts only prompted it to intensify its aggression.

“Bring it on, you bitch!” Weed yelled as he swung the sword and confronted the wolf.

Howl

Yelping, the wolf leapt on him. From that time, Weed’s pose and moves changed drastically.

His legs were glued to the ground while his waist and shoulders rocked back and forth. Like a breeze, Weed let the fierce wolf pass by.

‘I’ll be a fool if I die here!’

Weed was capable of predicting the wolf’s next move, and a single wound wasn’t as much as he had been afraid of.

‘I know I can defeat it!’

Weed loosened his grip on the sword on purpose.

Wail

The wolf groaned in a cry of pain. Even after Weed had sacrificed a portion of his power in exchange for a higher speed, the physical damage delivered by his sword was substantial.

“Damn it!”

Weed was also wounded every time the wolf clawed at him. His life of 700 fell to 200.

He was already coated in his own blood.

“Sorry, Weed-nim! I can’t pin it down. It’s moving too fast!”

Pale’s low agility made it impossible to make a hit on the wolf, which moved like a streak of lightning.

“I’ll fight, too.”

Surka came to Weed. She had already been injured when she had been chased by the wolf, her life lower than half.

Stumbling with shaky legs, Weed said, “Now, listen. You guys should all run to safety while I can still cover you.”

“But...”

“It’s the only chance you have. Now!”

Pale and Surka looked at each other, but their legs showed no sign of fleeing.

Then, Weed murmured bleakly, “You fools! What’s the point of sacrificing your life for a stranger?”

Pale felt like crying. For the record, Weed could have escaped death if he had decided to. He could have outrun the wolf to the gate of the Citadel where the guards would protect him from the threat.

Instead, Weed had stepped up, held his sword and his ground, and faced the wolf for his teammates, who he had never seen hours before.

“Weed-nim.” Surka’s eyes were watering. She, so innocent and sensitive, was deeply touched by Weed’s heroic act.

Staring at the wolf, Weed said firmly. “If you want to stay here, so be it. I’ll do my best to fight the bitch. Still, you must get the heck out of here the moment I get killed.”

“Yes.”

“Promise me you will.”

“Okay.”

Surka and Pale walked away, creating a stage, and Weed got down to a bloody fight against the wolf, which still posed a serious

threat.

Weed's life descended to 150 and before long, it went down to 70. The iron sword kept on missing the wolf by inches.

The wolf was bleeding so heavily that it seemed that a single hit could knock it down, but Weed had failed to make the final strike so far.

Irene and Romuna realized that Weed's life finally reached the life-risking moment, below ten percent.

Pale's heart raced, and Surka's pounded. They tried to attract aggression from the wolf, but it knew Weed was the one to kill, entirely neglecting minor players.

One more hit from the wolf, and Weed would die.

If Weed died, he would lose some items from his inventory, drop one or more levels and be penalized by having his access to Royal Road denied for the next twenty-four hours, all because Weed decided to sacrifice his life to save a bunch of strangers.

The wolf snickered, sensing it had the upper hand of his archenemy.

Growl

When the wolf leapt to kill Weed with its final strike, his sword, which had missed it repeatedly, finally tore its ribs.

Before Weed’s eyes, a cascade of message windows burst open.

Ting

You have leveled up!

Level up: Sword Mastery (Beginner Lv: 5 | 0%):

+50% Strength

+15% Agility

New Skill: Sculpting Blade Technique

So many EXPs were pouring from the wolf that his level escalated to 5. Weed shook his head, half wondering.

“What’s the Sculpting Blade technique?”

"Open Skill Window"

Identification (Beginner Lv: 1 | 0%):

Enables you to learn the true value of unidentified items.

Mana consumption:30.

Sculpture Mastery (Beginner Lv: 1 | 0%):

Enables you to carve or engrave various types of materials. Artworks of a high artistic value are worth a fortune. Easier to win a girl's heart.

Repair (Beginner Lv: 1 | 0%):

Enables you to repair weapons and armors. Beyond level 5, you can forge new weapons and gears.

Handicraft (Beginner Lv: 1 | 0%):

Has extra effects on various types of craft skills, and sword mastery.

Sword Mastery (Beginner Lv: 5 | 0%):

Increases attack power and hit rating for swords.

Sculpting Blade Technique (Beginner Lv: 1 | 0%):

Enables you to carve the invisible, the intangible.

Mana consumption:50 per second.

The legend tells that Grand Master Zahab accidentally discovered a way of truth when he was practicing the sculptural art—that sculpture is an art of transforming all creations at the sculptor’s will. Zahab’s secret technique is passed down to his successor.

Weed checked the skill window and shook his head in disbelief.

I need to try this Sculpting Blade technique to figure out what the heck it is. It swallows mana too badly. At my level, I can’t sustain it longer than two seconds flat.

The wolf had died, anyway.

Groan

Weed fell down to the ground, his face blank white. Then, Pale,

Irene, Romuna and Surka ran to him.

The first words Weed uttered to his teammates were, “Surka, are you alright?”

“Weed-nim...”

Irene and Romuna were on the verge of bursting into tears.

Surka could not hide her tears.

Pale, the only man other than Weed, was at a loss for words, engulfed by a wave of emotion.

If a user’s life goes down below ten percent, he will die slowly.

Within a minute, Irene recovered some of her mana, and cast Healing Hand to drag Weed out of death’s grip.

“Thank you, Irene-nim”

“It’s my pleasure, Weed-nim”

The look between Weed and Irene warmed up; a sign that she was growing fond of him, the same goes for Romuna and Surka. To his surprise, moreover, Pale was addressing him with respect and admiration that the archer had never shown before.

“Let’s move on,” Weed said when he felt better.

“Are you okay?”

“Yup. Alive and well,” Weed said, rolling up his sleeve to expose his muscles.

Surka didn’t make the same mistake again. The party under Weed’s leadership created a striking record of sixty foxes in the next four hours.

Romuna, Irene, Pale and Surka all leveled up, as well as Weed, who achieved level 6.

Weed invested all of his bonus the stat points into the agility stat.

“Whew. Good,” Romuna said, sweating hard as she felt drained by the excessive consumption of mana.

“We have to leave now. We’ve got to go to classes in the morning,”

“We should get together and hunt again. You’ll be here tomorrow, won’t you?” Romuna asked Weed, who nodded slightly.

“Can I add you as a friend in my list?” Surka asked.

Pale and Irene were grinning.

“Yup.” Weed added them to his Friends List, and said goodbye.

“Here, this is your share of the loot.”

Weed received three silvers when they distributed the spoils from hunting. After they left, he went on hunting more foxes.

This was why he hated party plays. When things got hot, people left.

Weed looked for monsters as he had an hour left until sunrise. He overlooked easy prey such as raccoons and foxes, and left the boundary of the Citadel to enter a forest where wolves were reported to lurk in every shadow.

Howl

A pack of wolves emerged. They crouched and came close to Weed who was walking alone, their eyes gleaming in elation.

The system of Royal Road allowed monsters to level up by internal conflicts between them or by killing users, so the wolves coveted lone users. However, when the wolves looked into Weed's eyes, though, they cowered instinctively.

“~Th-Those eyes...”

“~This human doesn’t consider us his enemy.”

“~He takes us for EXPs!”

“~Nice EXPs. Great item drops. It’s what he wants from us!”

The wolves all saw through Weed’s intentions. Worse, his will to fight made them recoil in fear.

Yap!?

Yap?!

After a moment they all turned tail to flee quickly.

“You dare try to flee from me!” Weed roared at the wolves as he gave chase.

The iron sword knew no mercy, and Weed knew no honor. He openly stabbed the backs of the retreating wolves, cornered them with nowhere else to go, and beat each and every one of them to a pulp.

“You sons of bitches, come on!” he raged.

The moment that the sword slashed the air, another wolf fell into despair. Swift and merciless. Weed's extraordinary sword techniques terrorized the wolves.

So why had he fought bitterly against a single wolf when his teammates were around him?

On the edge of an imminent and unavoidable death, Weed had made the final strike to kill the wolf. In the eyes of his teammates, it was a lucky one. This mystery was kept by Weed.

Weed was done with the wolves as soon as the sun rose in the morning. He left the battlefield and headed for Counselor Rodriguez's manor.

Chapter 05: The Girl Who Lost Words

“Damn... it’s day again.”

Early in the morning, Lee Hyun was already deflated.

The South Korean Parliament in their infinite wisdom, have passed an unwanted bill nicknamed 'Leave No One Behind', which was devised to weed out anti-social outcasts and misfits from Korean society.

This whole stupidity was founded on the theory that insisted that those who were born and brought up with defective backgrounds created a higher risk of people committing violent crimes and filing for divorces. e.g. Those families with no parents and had massive debts to pay off to loan sharks.

According to the law, all Korean citizens who were twenty years or older with noticeable defects in their background were required by law to visit a psychiatrist occasionally for a mental exam.

In short, Lee Hyun was eligible for it as he had lost his parents in his childhood, and his adolescence had been haunted by the loan sharks.

So Lee Hyun went to the ‘Great Society Rehabilitation Center’.

“I feel like I’ve time traveled back to the sixties. Great Society my

ass, how lame.” Muttering complaints all the way, Lee Hyun walked into the rehab center. The name suggested a romantically decorated interiors. The reception room was filled with the twenty year-olds who had also come to take their medical tests under the Socially Inept Law, so he had to waste another hour waiting for his turn to register.

“Hi, I’m Lee Hyun. I’m here to take a mental test under Leave No One Behind.”

“I see. Please fill out this form.” A nurse in a white gown handed a piece of paper to Lee Hyun.

“What is this?”

“We will create a complete analysis of your mental state based on your answers to this questionnaire. If you fall into the category of the socially inept, you will be ordered to enter the rehab center and receive periodic treatment. In that case, the government will send a monthly check to your family in compensation.”

What an inhumane law. The government had done virtually nothing to support the disadvantaged when they were suffering horrifying childhoods, abused by their parents or cast out from school.

Noooo..... now they had to accept a handicap if they wanted to apply to an undergraduate school when they were out of high school. Worse still, they were not even eligible for government jobs. The War on Terror presented a viable excuse to segregate the

haves from the havenots.

“Yes, Ma’am.”

Lee Hyun took the form and filled it out quickly. Not once did the pen leave the surface of the paper. Lee Hyun had thought of those questions for many years, so the answers were flowing from his heart.

“I’m done. Can I leave now?”

“Sure. Take this to cover your bus fare.”

At least, the government showed a small token of pity. Lee Hyun took the coins and left the asylum. Meanwhile, the questionnaire submitted by him started a row among the psychiatrists in the center.

*

Cha Eunhee, Ph.D. in psychiatry was laughing her head off as if her neck was broken. The doctor whose attitude earned her the nickname of Ice Queen, was laughing mindlessly in public was a rare sight to nurses.

“Did she finally succeed in communicating with her pet dog?”

“Guess so. Nothing is impossible for the Dr.”

Dr. Cha had immigrated to the United States with her parents, both diplomats, when she was young. She had graduated cum laude from Harvard University at the age of twenty, and earned her doctorate before she turned twenty-three.

(PR: 'cum laude', is latin and roughly means: graduated with honors)

Combining beauty and culture, yet puffed up with pride, she had never shown this level of humanity before, which became a topic on everyone's lips. In the end, the chief nurse decided to put her head above the parapet.

“Dr. Cha, what's so funny?”

“Check this out.”

Laughing so hard she was crying, Dr. Cha gave the chief nurse what she was holding in her hand. It was a single page of a form that someone had filed out under Leave No One Behind. The Seven short questions and equally short answers.

Questionnaire:

Name: Lee Hyun

1. What is your name?

Lee Hyun.

2. What is your profession?

A great villain who will threaten world peace.

3. What are you doing?

Filling out this questionnaire.

4. What are the three most memorable, or valuable, things that you have done in your life?

Hit maximum level in the Continent of Magick. Played the online game for 200 hours running without eating or sleeping. Sold my account.

5. What do you think of politicians In power?

Why can't we just export them to China and Japan?

6. When did you recognize your social position?

After I watched 'Planet of the Apes'.

7. How would you describe your Identity In a single sentence?

I am Da Dragon.

The nurse looked taken aback when she finished reading the document.

“Don’t tell me— is this an excerpt from some graphic novel?”

“No. It looks like one of the subjects filled this out this morning. Can’t you see the stamp of confirmation right at the bottom?”

“A typical nutcase.”

“You’re wrong again. If he were a nutcase, he wouldn’t be observing society as sarcastically and precisely as he did in this questionnaire.”

Against common sense, Dr. Cha concluded he was mentally normal. From a psychiatrist’s perspective, she could almost hear a scream of desperation rising from those answers.

To be able to ridicule society in such a way, this young man named Lee Hyun must have lived a colorless life in a world of cruelty.

“Whew.” The chief nurse could not help but sigh.

She had no reason to contradict the doctor's conclusion. Nevertheless, she thought that either Dr. Cha, who had earned a Ph.D. in psychiatry in the United States and been idolized in globally recognized medical periodicals, was above normal, or this Lee Hyun guy was below normal.

‘Both of them are simply abnormal. Or they are normal, and I’m the only crazy one in the room. Maybe the hard truth is, the whole world has gone insane’, she thought as her head spun.

Dr. Cha picked up the form and got up.

“Society needs different kinds of people. Let it be. You don’t need to look deep into it. By the way, I’m going to show this to Seoyoon.”

“Patient Jeong Seoyoon?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think she will read it?”

“She will. Those who shut their mind are more likely to yearn for attention from outside. I just hope she will laugh this time.” Dr. Cha took the questionnaire that Lee Hyun had filled in and headed to the ward. Her destination was a special ward located on the 12th floor.

With the brand-new medical instruments and best doctors,

furnished with a private swimming pool and an indoor gym, the room cost nearly twenty million won a day.

“Hi, Seoyoon, I’m here to see you.”

Beaming at her patient, Cha Eunhee entered the ward. A pale-faced girl lifted her head from a book that she was reading. Who, even among supermodels whose looks are their only highlights, would be overshadowed by her beauty—but her face was empty of emotion. Like a French doll, she seemed just as lifeless.

‘God ended up giving her beauty, more than she could live with’ Dr. Cha thought sadly.

For the girl was so beautiful, she was overly-loved by her protective father. The taboo blurring the line between father and daughter had never been broken, but her mother was paranoid, suspicious of her husband and deeply jealous of her own daughter beauty, resulting in relentless abuse in the early years, and then came the tragedy on that fateful day. Since then, the girl had lost the power of speech.

Back when she was young, Seoyoon had been an angel trapped in an earthly body. Dr. Cha, who used to be a close friend of hers, always felt sorry that she was deprived of her fair share of love and innocence.

“Take a look at this. I’m not allowed to remove any document from my office, but I wanted to show it to you.” Dr. Cha gave the girl the form submitted by Lee Hyun.

Seoyoon's lifeless and empty eyes glided over the paper, and Dr. Cha had hoped that she would burst into a fit of laughter.

Dr. Cha hoped, against all odds, that Seoyoon would open up if only just a little bit.

'Do you know that, if you laugh this time or even smile, it will be your first in about five years?' Dr. Cha thought sadly.

But the still face shattered the doctor's hopes. The girl looked over the questionnaire and just returned it to her. The doctor once more felt heartbroken as she remembered how bright Seoyoon had once been.

"Alright... Do you need anything else?" Dr. Cha asked.

Seoyoon gently shook her head.

"Then, feel free to call me anytime you need something."

Dr. Cha slipped out of the room in silence.

"Did she laugh?" the nurse asked; she wasn't permitted to enter the room.

Dr. Cha smiled bitterly. "It didn't work again," the nurse said, answering her own question when she saw the Dr. Cha bitter

smile.

“No. I can’t find a way to open her heart or mind,” Dr. Cha said. “I must rehabilitate her to maintain the president’s faith in me—no, on behalf of Seoyoon...”

Countless of psychologists, psychiatrists and even shamans had been hired to tackle Seoyoon’s condition, to no avail. None of them could melt her frozen heart. Now, nearly everyone had given up any hope for helping the girl.

The nurse was also tearful. She was sad that such a cute girl neither talked nor laughed, stuck alone in her own closed shell.

“Isn’t there any other form of therapy or medicine to help her?” the nurse asked.

“A psychiatric remedy won’t work as long as the patient refuses to open her mind and accept reality,” Dr. Cha said.

“Then, she’s going to live like that for the rest of her life...”

“We must do something to get her back. She just needs a cue, something that will lead her to face reality.”

“But it’s already been five years. Her consciousness might have gotten stuck by now—or worse yet be, long gone.”

“It is our job to not let that happen. No matter what, I will bring her back.” Dr. Cha’s resolution was fierce.

She had majored in psychiatry and voluntarily come to this hospital in order to save Seoyoon.

“I already started a new treatment a year ago.”

“I’ve never heard of it.”

“Of course not. It’s because I had to keep it secret. It’s Royal Road. She’s spending her days and nights in the game, except for medication and counseling,”

“Then—”

“Exactly. Let her start over in the fictional world. Take her out of the shell, and she will move on step by step where she can interact with others. I hope she will regain her lost faith in people, and feel emotions that she had never felt before, at least in virtual reality.”

*

Back home, Lee Hyun visited the item transaction site before he logged into Royal Road.

Though Lee Hyun had traded only one item on there so far, his account status was triple diamond. This is because of the account

in the Continent of Magick that he sold, that was valued at over three billion won.

It alone elevated him to VIP prestige status.

[Buy] Iron Sword +20 STR for 400,000 won.

[Buy] Rings 4 warriors. Offer.

[Buy] Blue Boots for Ranger Class. 300,000 won – negotiable.

[Buy] Earrings for Mages. Royal Road Kelly book value plus extra.

A list of items in demand was thousands of pages long, and keyword search yielded millions of search results, but only a few of them actually reached a deal.

As plenty of users were eager to get hold of cool items, the demand was insanely high. Basicly, the suppliers couldn't keep up with the demand.

The system favored sellers, and when one of them posted his or her item, the auction was wrapped up in minutes.

[Sell] Mace of Red Spirit 105/105 Durability w/ 96-105 DMG +15 STR [100,000 won]

[Sell] Shine's Blessing Ring: Rare / Heals 3 MP per sec for 5 min
[From 3,000,000 won]

[Sell] Messiah Earring: Mag def. up. Fire magic +8% exp.
[4,000,000 won]

[Sell] Blacksmith's Hammer of Thomas: +15% for success rate in forging weaponry. Enables you to produce upgraded weapons at 5,000,000 won

Items in the top 10% of the auction boasted outrageous prices.

They were followed by lesser items beneath, which still amounted to at least a hundred thousand won.

This bull market signaled that items were in short supply.

If Weed had not been fortunate enough to obtain the iron sword in the beginning, he would have repeated commonplace quests here and there to collect a few coppers each time, and rushed to a blacksmith's workshop to buy a crude sword before he headed to the field.

Otherwise, he would have to punch monsters, relying on the stats that he had accumulated by striking the scarecrow.

In that case, his attack power would have been halved without the effects of sword mastery. Compared to weapons and gear that were highly configured, craft items for blacksmith and tailoring

were inexpensive. Items relevant to the sculptor class were not even available.

Royal Road had opened only fifteen months before, and the users were still immersed in leveling up and adventuring. So far, Lee Hyun hadn't seen any other craftsmen.

Seventy percent of the continent was still uncharted, that is why many dungeons are still unexplored, and many quests unsolved. With an infinite opportunity presented before their eyes, only a few users dreamed of becoming craftsmen.

Rosenheim Kingdom was a relatively new portion of the world that had only been discovered roughly six months before (according to real world time). According, the expedition party who first spotted the kingdom had earned tremendous monetary gains.

Rosenheim was far away from the center of the continent, but uncharted territories and unearthed dungeons were scattered everywhere, and strong monsters abounded. This was the primary reason why Lee Hyun chosen Rosenheim to start off his grand adventure.

“Did I start too late? No, I still have a chance to catch up,” he told himself.

Lee Hyun shook his head. While the competitors were leveling up and having adventure, Lee Hyun had worked out and collected information instead for one whole year to prepare. He didn't want

to sell his account anymore.

The procedure of an online game's account transaction was trickier in a virtual reality game where an iris scan was taken to verify the player's identity. Plus, Lee Hyun had to stay in the business rather than making a quick buck.

Royal Road had to support his family financially at least in the next five years.

"At this rate, Royal Road will give my family something to live off of for the next five, no, ten years. Then, I can afford to send Hayan to college. Stability comes first. I'm a high school dropout, but Hayan deserves a better life—" he said to himself.

Ring

The phone suddenly started ringing.

Lee Hyun looked around and realized that Grandma and Hayan were out of the house, so he picked up the phone reluctantly.

"Hello. Who's speaking?"

"Lee Hyun, is that you? You still sound rough on the phone, man. It's me, Sanghoon."

"Oh, it's you. Sanghoon."

Lee Hyun had not heard this voice for a long time. Since I dropped out of high school, he thought bitterly.

“Hey, what’s up?” Lee Hyun asked.

“We have an alumni reunion tonight—”

“I don’t give a shit about it. Isn’t it supposed be attended by the graduates only? It’s not even funny if a dropout like me shows up in the reunion.”

“But—”

“No buts. You know why I quit school. I don’t want anything to do with the school now. That’s it.”

“ ... ”

“Do me a favor, Sanghoon. Don’t ever call me again.”

Slam

Lee Hyun dropped the phone and sighed deeply. It was a phone call that he didn’t want in the least.

If only he had been given an MIB-type memory eraser, then,

without question, he would have erased the whole three years of high school—the worst memory and one of the lowest points of his life.

Back then, Lee Hyun had been beaten and threatened by the loan sharks. He had to sneak in to school. He had gone to school at dawn and left at midnight as if he were playing hide and seek.

For a couple of days, Lee Hyun had dodged the loan sharks, but they were smarter than he thought. They had hired street racketeers to pressure the teachers at the school.

Lee Hyun had even been told by his homeroom teacher to pay back his debt, right in front of his classmates.

The teacher had knelt before the lost student, pleading amid tears that he didn't want to get involved in that madness.

“It was the last straw. I quit school the next day,” he mumbled to himself.

Lee Hyun was a little curious what his old school friends were like in college. But showing his face in the reunion would only revive those shameful moments.

‘The inescapable truth is, the only thing left for me to do is to play the virtual reality game.’ Lee Hyun finished lunch and slipped into the game again.

*

Weed never skipped his daily routine of settling down in front of Rodriguez's manor from dawn to sunset. Who else would be able to cope with boring days such as this?

“What do you think about going hunting in the West Valley? Harpies have a high level, but if we team up together, they’re piece of cake.”

“I heard you joined an escort quest for the caravans bound for Eline Village?”

“The price of troll blood has soared lately by almost triple the usual amount. I’m afraid a big war’s coming.”

Plenty of conversations snuck into Weed’s ears.

Horses whinnied, carriages wheeled by.

Sitting by the main avenue, Weed could catch lots of information. He learned what was going on in the world. Without this type of fun, he would have given up already.

When Weed struck the scarecrow, he was at least enjoying a sense of becoming more powerful. It was self-torturing that he had to sit still under the harsh sunlight.

‘Didn’t Buddha face a wall for several days, meditating?’ he asked himself.

He was going through a similar experience, resolved to see Rodriguez.

For the last two days, Weed had met Pale and Irene to go hunting together. They were not as strong as he, so they earned EXPs more slowly.

Still, they could hunt monsters as they pleased, day and night. Thanks to their flexible schedule, they caught up with Weed’s level.

Thirty percent bonus on EXPs at night is technically canceled out by the fact that monsters are stronger by half than during daytime. More often than not, daytime hunting is more efficient for low-level users.

Plus, Weed was penalized by being undecided class-wise, so that he could not learn any skills. He would lag behind in skill levels if he converted to a class at a higher level than an average user. Last but not least, it tested his patience that he was wasting valuable time waiting in the middle of a street.

‘What can I do now? Sculpture mastery... sculptures...’ Weed looked around. He found a piece of wood that seemed to have been thrown off from a carriage’s wheel.

Picking up the piece of wood, Weed activated the sculpture skill
“Carve this.”

Slide

As Weed’s hand was moving, the wood was cut here and there.

“What the—!”

When the skill finished carving, Weed sighed. The once square piece of wood was whittled to a small circular piece.

“I’d better do it myself.”

Weed picked up another piece of wood and began cutting it with the sculpting knife. With his past experience of toiling in a textile factory focused his hands, and craft was like a second nature to him.

The sculpting knife was so sharp that with just a touch, it carved through the wood. After a few attempts at trial and error, he finally carved the wooden piece into a short sword.

Ting

Sculpture Mastery proficiency has increased.

Handicraft proficiency has increased.

Two pop-up message windows appeared in cascade.

Weed learned something— that he didn't need to rely on the sculpture skill to carve an object, and that when he used the skill, he had to recognize exactly what shape he was working on.

I'd better practice sculpture more often.

Bored, Weed gathered several pieces of wood and started carving them.

‘It's fun in its own way.’

It suddenly struck Weed that when he was in grade school, his art teachers had praised him for being good at making things. What Weed carved usually turned out useless, but a few of them looked acceptable even to his eyes.

He spent five hours carving wooden pieces. It seemed odd that a man should sit down cutting wood with an sculpting knife, but he felt it was better than killing time in vain.

Ting

Level up: Sculpture Mastery (Beginner Lv: 2 | 0%):

Enables to produce more complicated works.

Decreases the rate at which you fail the skill.

Weed’s handicraft skill and sculpture mastery leveled up quickly because their comparatively low level needed a small amount of EXPs to reach the higher level.

“Wow.” Weed was awed.

As his level in sculpture mastery rose, various windows appeared while he was carving a piece of wood.

Visual tips were given, such as where to cut in a circle or what patterns were available. Weed could choose one of the tips, which was automatically processed. Even if he made an error, the sculpture mastery supplemented it to refine the final product.

Now he was making quality statues. Weed carved a fox that he had hunted the other night, and a wolf statue was easier than he had thought. He placed completed animated statues beside him.

Weed’s skill level was currently two, but Zahab’s sculpting knife doubled it to four.

The knife was unique item that any sculptor would die for willingly. The problem is no one cares.

The sculptor class is near extinction. Even if there are some sculptor-wannabes left, their levels are mediocre, so it is hopeless to expect a good price for Zahab’s sculpting knife.

When Weed finished one of the pieces of artwork—

Ting

New Stat: Art

“Art?”

Ting

Art Stat:

A gift in comprehending and practicing in creating. Art renders meals and products elegant in an aesthetic and practical sense. Improves when you see, hear, smell, taste or touch beautiful things, or create artworks.

“ ... ”

Weed fell silent. Calculating the infinite potential promised by the art stat. Then, he made a quick decision.

“Delete the art stat!”

Ting

This stat cannot be deleted!

“Darn it!”

A user cannot create stats infinitely. The maximum number of stat slots is fifteen.

Weed found it intolerable that one of the slots was wasted on the art. Still, though he planned to fill them only with absolutely necessary ones.

‘It can’t be helped!’ he thought bitterly.

For Weed couldn't care less about the art stat. He swore that he would never distribute any bonus stat points to it.

He was relieved to know that the stat would increase automatically, but he was skeptical about how it would work.

Weed kept on carving wooden pieces. He was more interested in side effects than sculpture mastery itself, though.

“Sculpture mastery is good for nothing. But handicraft skill is worth effort in many areas. It will increase the attack power of swords, and archery relies on the hands. I can work on sensitive crafts, too.”

Handicraft skill is a necessity to influence everything everywhere.

You gained expertise rating in Handicraft skill.

Ting

Level up: Handicraft (Beginner Lv: 3 | 0%):

Enables you to learn cooking and tailoring skills.

Increases attack power with melee and long range weapons. (+3% ATK)

Increases attack power with fists. (+5% ATK)

Weed’s handicraft skill level hit three as sculptural art helped him obtain EXPs faster.

It really pays off.

Weed was satisfied with a swift increase in his handicraft skill level. It was partly because the artworks that he had produced were, in fact, at level four thanks to Zahab’s sculpting knife, but sculpture mastery was the main factor.

Cooking and tailoring skills, for example, affect the handicraft skill greatly, yet they cannot rival sculpture mastery in delicacy and adeptness.

Simply put, sculpture mastery is essential to improve handicraft skill. Needless to say, nobody would bother learning sculpture mastery in order to improve the handicraft skill.

“Shit, I will never learn tailoring. I hate it!”

Weed considered it positive to master the basic cooking skills so that he could enjoy delicious food with online recipes.

Not to mention that buying ingredients directly from a grocery store and cooking them with his hands was cheaper than ordering a meat in a fine restaurant.

Also, Weed could preserve stamina better by use of hand-made meals when he went out on a hunting mission for one or more weeks without returning to civilization. Instant food could not restore the stamina stat to full.

Besides, Weed was so haunted by the memory of toiling strenuously in a textile factory that he was resolved to refrain from learning the tailoring skill.

“I hate tailoring more than anything else. I’ll never, ever touch the damned thing,” he told himself.

Absorbed in working on statues, Weed didn't realize that he was shadowed by black figures until his ears caught strange conversations.

“Wow, it's lovely~!”

“It looks like they're real.”

“I've never seen such lively artwork before.”

Weed looked up in the direction of the shadows. There was a group of people viewing his statutes with admiration.

A tiny, cute girl pointed her finger at the rabbit-like statue.

“Hi, ajussi, is it on sale?”

(PR: The Korean word: ajhussi, is usually used when you're referring to a man older than you)

Weed would have gently corrected her that he was only a teenager, but the way a single woman in her thirties would react to an 'old lady' label.

But...

“Yes. What can I do for you, young lady?” Weed said, smiling

politely, for he smelt money.

“I want that one. How much is it?”

Handing over the rabbit statue, Weed gave it a passing thought.

“It’s...” Weed was pressured to call for a fair price.

Dump those statues at a profit now, or they would sit there forever, ending up in a trash bin. He showed two fingers.

“I’ll take so much,” Weed said.

“Two silvers? It’s cheaper than I thought!” The girl paid two silver coins and picked up the statue.

“This rabbit’s really cute. I’ll keep it as souvenir.”

Stupefied, Weed stared at her back as she left pleasantly. Two fingers meant two copper coins. Only two coppers. But the girl paid two hundred times his call.

“Hey, I want to buy one too!”

“Same here. I’ll take the two foxes over there.”

Weed’s little statues sold well.

Small ones were priced at two silvers, large ones three. Fox and rabbit statues that he had hunted in the field around the Citadel were more popular than sword-or shield-shaped ones.

The animals looked cute, and customers preferred them in memory of their newbie-hood.

A level 100 user could easily make a couple of gold a day. To them, two silvers was a bargain.

The stock of statues quickly sold out.

“Can you please make us a fox-shaped statue? A fox with nine tails. Can you do that?”

Weed contemplated it and nodded.

The request wasn't as hard as it sounded. The standard form of a fox plus nine tails. Why not?

“Yes, sir. But you have to pay extra for a customized version.”

“How much is it?”

“Five silvers would do it.”

When the word ‘five’ came out of his mouth, Weed regretted that he might have gone overboard, but the buyers were quick to respond.

“Great. I want it. Then, you should make it look very beautiful. Please?”

In the Citadel, there is a sculpture shop, but it specializes in life-size statues, sometimes adorned with gold and gems, that are not affordable for most users. Since no one else was interested in sculpture mastery, those statues that Weed carved had a collectible value.

“Wow, it’s so cool~!”

Those who bought statues were excited, adoring their recent purchases.

“Can I get your name? So when I want to buy another one, I’ll look for you.”

“Weed – Sculptor Weed. If you ever want to have a statue to your liking, please feel free to contact me.”

“Thank you. See you later.”

Before sunset, rumors of the sculptor spread to the other ends of the Citadel and people came over to visit Weed.

“Oh, there he is!”

“I want you to make some statues for us.”

Weed had earned four silvers from overnight hunting the other night, but one or two statues made more money now. It took only ten minutes to carve a statue. As materials cost almost nothing, it was a very lucrative trade.

The next day, Weed stopped by a carpenter's shop and bought wood in bulk. He began to mass produce statues.

As the handicraft skill and sculpture mastery upgraded, more beautiful and delicate pieces were churned out.

Needless to say, blessed by his higher skill mastery, they sold at a higher price and at a quicker pace.

Successful masterpieces, one or two in every thousand, were even put up for auction.

His opinion of sculpture mastery changed slightly in the process— a part time job to secure a satisfactory amount of pocket money.

Chapter 06: Over A Barbecue

Rodriguez was afflicted by a serious disturbance.

Grind

It was the sixth day, and that fellow called Weed was still sitting down right across from the manor. Rodriguez in his seclusion had been aware of the presence of the intruder right from the first day. Rodriguez bet that Weed was busy selling his silly little statues to customers still.

“I need to figure out this man and what he wants from me.” Rodriguez muttered to himself.

In spite of his extreme laziness, on the sixth day Rodriguez finally gave in to his curiosity and moved his butt.

“Greetings, stranger. I am Rodriguez. What have you been waiting here to give me?”

“Wow! The Counselor’s come out!”

“It’s really him!”

“Rodriguez, the Star of Wisdom!”

The crowd in the line waiting to buy Weed's statues was astounded.

Sages have something in common— they want to be left alone. Especially so when a stranger claims that he has brought something to be dealt with urgently. Rodriguez finally showed up outside the gate.

Weed fished a handkerchief inscribed with a blue bird from his pocket and presented it to the counselor.

“This is why I bothered waiting for the last six days, Counselor.”

Rodriguez's eyes were immediately filled with tears.

“Aye, this is one of Queen Evane's handkerchiefs... There are too many eyes and ears here. Why don't you come in, traveler?”

“Yes, sir. Sorry guys! I'm closed for today!”

Beaming triumphantly, Weed folded his stall and stood up.

“No way!”

“Let me see, too!”

The crowd cried in protest, some of them even expressing

grievance at being left out of the historical moment, but neither Weed nor Rodriguez could care less. Rodriguez then led his guest into the manor.

“Now that it’s quiet. Anyone who brings me an item that once belonged to Queen Evane is privileged to ask me one thing.”

“Yes, I know, sir.” Weed replied.

Counselor Rodriguez! Sometime ago, he had publicly declared that a man who brought an item that was once one of Queen Evane’s belonging was to be granted an audience. In this case, Weed had presented her handkerchief.

“Speak traveler. I’m all ears for anything you say.”

Rodriguez’s sincere tone portrayed the Sage’s duty when dealing with a fellow man’s distress. But the counselor was only pretending.

While Queen Evane’s handkerchief was invaluable to Rodriguez, he didn’t have the slightest intention to help Weed. Didn’t that contradict his promise? No, not really.

Rodriguez urged Weed to speak, and added that he would listen to anything from him. All that the counselor was obliged to do was learn what Weed was concerned about, in order to satisfy his intellectual desire and curiosity, that is all. He never considered actually presenting a solution to whatever problem Weed had.

A good number of users had been cheated by Counselor Rodriguez in a similar manner. He had always played along with them, and evaded giving the answers that they had desperately sought.

Aside from his glorious title of The Star of Wisdom, the counselor was widely slandered as Dead End of Quests. Weed didn't fall for such a childish and naive trick. To begin with, he didn't trust Rodriguez.

A man is a very weak being. This was what Weed had felt earnestly throughout a year's preparation ahead of Royal Road— a weakening will and a comfort-seeking body. Weed never trusted himself, so why should he trust Rodriguez who he had not seen before?

“Does it make any difference if I tell you my problem?”

“What do you mean by any difference, traveler?”

“Will you help me when you hear me speak, Counselor?”

“That's...”

“Then, I refuse to say anything. Why bother? It will only get my tongue tired.”

Rodriguez knitted his brows. He pretended that his integrity was being soiled by Weed's paranoia.

"Aye, Weed-nim. Speak to me now! You may take the liberty of telling me anything you have on your mind. You brought me Queen Evane's handkerchief, and it is now your right to speak your mind,"

Rodriguez said in his best coaxing tone.

They were the words that Weed had been waiting for.

'I will get him to talk!'

Unfortunately for the Counselor, Weed was shrewder than the bunch who Rodriguez had dealt with before. He demanded the final seal of confirmation. "Counselor, will you tell me what I want to know if I ask you?"

"..."

"I shall remain silent until you promise in your own words."

"Eh?... Now listen to me, Weed-nim."

"It seems Queen Evane's handkerchief is a priceless object, Counselor. In particular, to my eyes, it means something greater to you. Shall I take it back?"

“Keep it and leave now!”

“Sure. Godspeed, sir.”

When Weed actually took the handkerchief and turned around, Rodriguez held two hands up in the air like a white flag.

“Wait! I hereby promise to you in person, that I will give you guidance when I hear your request. I have already promised to answer anyone who brings Queen Evane’s belongings. So as long as it is within my capability, I am obliged to do so.”

“Will you make a man’s oath?”

“Of course... But you must do me a favor in return. Someday.”

Weed considered Rodriguez’s counter proposal, and nodded.

“Deal!”

The counselor smirked. “What is it that troubles you, Weed-nim? A trifling question could not compel you to stay out there for the last six days.” Rodriguez had his own agenda, though, behind his question, which spoke of his curiosity.

‘Who cares about you? How dare you humiliate me into striking a deal with such a lowly creature as you! Answer you? I will, oh I

will! But my answer shall be the trickiest one, terribly bent and crooked enough for you to pay the price!’

Rodriguez was confident in exacting revenge once he learned Weed’s request.

If Weed wanted to find someone, he would be told about a nephew of a cousin of a mother-in-law of a friend of a wife of the one in question, who he would have to trace back on his own. If Weed wanted to find a place, he would be told of a faraway land with a similar name.

Snickers

Whether he was suspicious of Rodriguez’s wily trick or not, Weed finally spoke his mind.

“I don’t know what class I should select.”

“Class? Now that I look at you, I see that you don’t even have one yet.”

“No, Counselor.” Weed confirmed.

Rodriguez laughed lightly. That was far more trivial than what he had predicted.

What he had in mind was that Weed would ask for the

whereabouts of a secret dungeon, or Rosenheim's future policies.

A good dungeon yields a fortune to its discoverer, and a policy is valuable if you know how to take advantage of it.

Suppose you learn in advance that the royal court is planning to develop the southern provinces next year, you can secure the commercial rights in the provinces preemptively and extract an enormous profit out of them.

A personal recommendation on what class to choose was indeed a piece of cake for Rodriguez.

"I can't believe such a light question has troubled your soul so profoundly. You didn't need to consult me in the first place. I advise you to visit an employment agency. Your six days have been wasted, Weed-nim."

"I was advised that the Counselor was the one who could make the best judgment."

"Oh? Well good then. I will recommend a perfect class for you! Show me your stats."

"Yes, sir."

Weed displayed the stat window for the first time since he had worked hard to improve his stats in the Training Hall.

“Open Stat Window”

Character Name: Weed

Alignment: Neutral

Profession: None

Title: None

Level: 13

Fame: 20

Health: 960

Mana: 100

Strength: 55

Agility: 105

Vitality: 50

Wisdom: 10

Intelligence: 10

Fighting Spirit: 67

Endurance: 89

Art: 23

Charisma: 0

Luck: 0

Offence: 19

Defense: 5

Weed had played day and night, and the outcome was level thirteen. He could take care of a wolf in no time now.

“My Freya!”

Rodriguez was stunned.

“Level thirteen, and life of nine hundred and sixty? For your level, you have exceeded fifty in strength and vitality, and a hundred in agility! Training Hall. I can tell you drilled in the Training Hall. Your willpower is undoubtedly admirable.”

Rodriguez lived up to his reputation as the Star of Wisdom that he guessed right based solely on Weed’s attributes. But his surprise didn’t end there.

“You have level four in sculpture mastery, and level six in craftsmanship skill! It is incredible, simply unbelievable! What journey have you taken, I beg to hear.”

Weed told Rodriguez what had happened. One event after another, Rodriguez could not close his mouth in incredulity.

“You have taken the most unusual quests thanks to your friendship with the instructor. And— what? Did you succeed Zahab’s will? But you have discarded the opportunity to become a Moonlight Sculptor?”

Wide-eyed, Rodriguez was taken aback. It should be noted that he had hardly flinched at the news of a neighboring kingdom suddenly invading Rosenheim without a preliminary declaration

of war.

‘Zahab. Who was he?’

He was one of the absolute powers hidden behind the scenes in the Continent.

Rodriguez had met Zahab a few times through Queen Evane’s influence, and come to admire his sculptural art and sword technique— revering the sculptor’s respectable personality and talents. Rodriguez had made friends with him. It had taken place fifty years before, the companionship between a pair of callow youths. The Counselor had even counseled His Highness to hold Zahab in the court at any cost.

“Hmph, you rejected such a fine class. What sort of class do you want to have, then?”

“Anything lucrative suits me.”

Rodriguez fell into silence.

‘Perhaps this chap is the One. The one that I have been waiting for. The Will of the Great Emperor might dwell in him — a mysterious class whose glorious traditions can be traced back to the Ancient Age.’

Geihar von Arpen, the legendary emperor who had conquered the entire continent— his blood flowed in the sage.

‘He still needs to prove his worth through tribulations. Can he pass the ultimate test? Anyway, it is he who will be tested, not I,’ the sage said to himself.

Rodriguez said in a serious tone,

“Weed-nim.”

“Yes sir?”

“I have a quest for you, though you must prove more patient than a caterpillar, more willing to survive than a cockroach, and more stubborn than a leech— or you will definitely fail. Are you qualified for this quest?”

“ ... ”

“What’s with that look?”

“I don’t like the way you describe it. But I can tell you proudly that I am ready to do anything.”

“Your confidence touches my heart. You look as if you can even chew maggots to the last drop of juice.”

“ ... ”

“Do as I say and the quest will give you a class. I warn you, however, that it will try your life. You are free to leave my advice on the table if you are afraid.”

Weed finally felt some suspicion towards Rodriguez’ scheme.

“Fine. I’m in.”

“Have you ever heard of the Lair of Litvart?”

“Yes. sir.”

The Lair of Litvart was coincidentally the destination of the quest that the instructor had mentioned to Weed. Or it’s not a coincidence? You’ll never know.

“Then, I am spared the inconvenience of elaborating on the details. Under your own power, destroy the cloud of evilness that creeps within that lair. Once that evil is vanquished, you shall be granted the class that is destined for you.”

Ting

Quest: Search and Destroy Operation in the Lair of Litvart [II]:

There are a hundred monsters inhabiting the Lair of Litvart. Kill each and every one of them at least once, and prove yourself worthy of the honorable class. The completion of this quest will open a right path for your destiny.

Difficulty:Unknown

Quest requirement:

None

Weed read and then reread the instructions over and over, down to the fine print. ‘This ancient so-and-so is definitely plotting something!’ Weed thought quickly.

Otherwise, Rodriguez wouldn’t have given Weed a quest related to the Lair of Litvart— an underground dungeon of five floors, the lair had been thoroughly explored, most of which was disclosed to the public domain.

Many users were hunting monsters down there day and night. Monsters between Level 20 and Level 50 frequented the lair, while Weed was still only level thirteen.

But the additional stats that he had improved in the Training Hall strengthened him so that he was almost as strong as an ordinary Level 40 Warrior. Taking passive skills such as sword mastery and craftsmanship skill into account, Weed was confident that he could take down up to Level 50 monsters.

Destroying monsters in the Lair of Litvart was going to be tough for Weed, yet far from impossible for him.

‘There's something is behind this, I don't know what, but it's something. I can trust that the sage is not lying to me, but I also know he's not telling me the full truth. Regardless, no matter what he is hiding from me, if I finish this quest, I'll certainly get a good class.’

The scent of a trap in this quest was unmistakable though.

‘It's not about hunting regular monsters in the lair. Then what?’ Weed's eyes flashed sharply.

“Tell me, Weed-nim. Will you take it or leave it? For your information, I can't come up with a better alternative. I will not force you however. The decision is totally yours to make.”

After a brief moment of mental juggling, Weed nodded.

“With respect, I gladly accept your advice, Counselor.”

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

“Good. Come back here when you have beaten all the monsters in the lair. In the rare event that you actually finish this quest. I have something to give you. It is certain, however, that you will absolutely fail.”

Rodriguez laughed treacherously.

*

Weed headed straight to the Training Hall. ‘I must get there in time.’

Weed’s footsteps moved fast because it was still before lunch break. When he entered the Hall, the instructor was about to stick a spoon in his lunchbox.

“Good afternoon, Honorable Instructor.”

“You surprised me, Weed-nim! I missed you so much.”

“I missed you, too. That’s why I am here.”

“Come over here and sit down. Help yourself before we get down to business.”

“Thank you, sir.”

With a good timing, Weed took care of lunch. The lunchbox was enormous, exactly proportional to the instructor’s tripleX body size.

Subtracting Weed’s portion from the lunchbox was like taking a cup of water from the ocean.

“By the way, Instructor, speaking of the quest you mentioned the other day—”

“Oh, that one.”

“Yes, I’d like to join it.”

“Haha. I knew it was coming, so I asked them to leave a place for you. I’m glad that you want the quest.”

The instructor generously granted Weed’s favor.

Ting

Quest: A Clean-up Operation in the Lair of Litvart:

Rosenheim Kingdom has been greatly suffering from the monsters, which have risen in number for the last decade.

King Theodarren, righteous and benevolent ruler of Rosenheim, issued a royal decree to order a distinguished knight, Sir Midvale, to explore the Lair of Litvart and root out monsters. Eradicate the monsters in the Lair of Litvart with Sir Midvale and his soldiers.

Difficulty level:E

Quest requirement:

Failed if you're killed.

You have accepted the quest!

“You have a day left until the troops leave tomorrow. Why don’t you come and stay over at my place?”

“Apologies, Instructor. I should run errands for the mission.”

“Too bad. I wanted to invite you to dinner.”

“Dinner?”

“Yes. My wife said this morning she was going to cook pork barbecue.”

Weed’s mouth watered at the thought of pork barbecue. Savory and spicy barbecue! This temptation was irresistible.

“To be honest with you, I always wanted to visit your place.”

“Haha, I knew it too.”

“Hehe.”

Weed was never ashamed that he was living an obsequious or subservient life.

But... He— he was just sick and tired of rye bread. Royal Road reproduces every aspect of reality, even taste, to the extent that sushi made of fish that was caught minutes ago actually tastes fresh, and outdated food hardens and rots. Rye bread is no exception.

For the last two months, Weed had eaten only rye bread and his tongue was flavored with rye. The sight of rye bread made him feel

like puking. A pork barbecue would be especially refreshing. Plus, it was a free meal—priceless.

“Then, I will come back in the evening, Instructor.”

“Sure, Weed-nim. See you later.”

Weed had accepted another quest in the Training Hall.

‘Now all three slots in the quest window are filled up.’

The top quest was about Zahab’s will, which was out of sight for now, whereas the other two quests were a combination set.

‘Now, the problem is that Rodriguez’s quest isn’t what it appears to be... but it doesn’t matter.’ Weed braced himself to face the challenge.

In the worst scenario, he would die, so what? He didn’t want to die meaninglessly, but some difficulties were always expected.

‘Now I need to get ready, First, I go shopping for the trip to the Lair of Litvart.’

Weed walked downtown. Pedestrians in chic costumes passed by, while having vibrant conversations. A bunch of users set up kiosks on the street and sold things.

Weed went to the blacksmith's workshop, and bought a bow and many quivers of arrows.

“Item Check: Bow of Theo Grande”

Bow of Theo Grande:

Durability:50/ 50

Attack:5-6

Multiple shot speed:4

A short bow that is strung with an Orc's muscle, crudely built, it has low accuracy but substantial attack power convenient for novices in archery.

The bow cost 1 gold and 20 silvers, but Weed would never pay the full price for anything. By presenting a butterfly-shaped statue to the cashier lady, he surrendered no more than one gold.

He had discovered accidentally that he could win ladies' hearts with sculpture gifts.

‘Sculpture mastery. It’s only useful on trifling occasions.’

Weed also bought a stock of rye bread, though he was sick and tired of it, bread is at least better than starvation, and when a fight breaks out, it reduces the rate at which the health factor declines. When the health factor falls below 30%, a user slows down, and loses a chunk of life temporarily.

His backpack was filled with quivers, herbs and bread. As soon as Weed was happy everything was present and correct, he went back to the instructor.

“I am done, Instructor.”

“Oh, I see. Let’s go to my place now. I have a guest waiting.”

“Guest? Did you invite someone else to dinner, Instructor?”

“Didn’t I mention her?”

The instructor looked somewhat confused, and then quickly regained his composure.

“She’s a nice girl. I am sure you will like her.”

Strange though it sounded, Weed casually put the matter to one side and relaxed.

The instructor held Weed's hand and walked to his place. His hand was as hairy as a gorilla's.

Weed wrinkled his forehead. "You may as well let go of my hand, Instructor."

"Surely not. I'm afraid you could lose me."

"Excuse me?"

Weed finally arrived at the instructor's house.

He had no doubt that when he opened the door, he would see the world's happiest family with a burning furnace that filled the living room with warm air.

Weed had already been told that the instructor had married a female barbarian, a true love overcoming the barrier of race, but they had not borne any offspring yet.

When the door opened, however, Weed was startled at a girl sitting by the dinner table.

'Incredible...'

For a moment, the girl's beauty took Weed's breath away. The scene that confronted him was idyllic. But he soon came down to

earth.

Since the girl was invited to the instructor's place, Weed had assumed that she was another NPC. She was a user, though, just like him.

By the look of her expensive-looking sword and armor, he could tell she was a high-level user.

However, that alone was not what shocked Weed. No, what shocked Weed the most was her name. The girl's username was blinking in bright red.

A user can hide his/her true identity, sometimes pretending to be an NPC as long as he wants it that way, but a murderer who has PKed one or more users is promptly denied the right to privacy.

A red name and a bloody diamond on the forehead— the sign of a murderer. It is the sign of one who has killed a fellow user.

“My, my. Take it easy, Weed-nim. Now you understand why I was holding your hand tight.”

Weed tried to run away, but his desperate attempt failed because the instructor was holding his hand.

“Instructor.”

“Huh?”

“I didn’t know you were so eager to get rid of me.”

“huhu~ So now you know.” he chuckled.

The instructor smiled treacherously, and Weed relaxed a little. He acknowledged that if the instructor wanted him dead, this man would have rather dirtied his own hands than go to someone else for it.

“Please be seated, let me introduce you to each other. This is Weed. His level is low, but he passed the basic training program perfectly.”

Weed bowed to the girl slightly but she ignored him, hardly tilting her head, “This is Seoyoon. She also passed it recently. She visits my place once a month to have dinner with us.”

“Hi. Nice to meet you.”

Weed greeted Seoyoon politely, but blank-faced, she didn’t even bother moving her eyes in his direction. It was a plain show of unfeigned unconcern.

‘You don’t want to hang out with lowly newbies or what? If I didn’t have to be in the same room, I wouldn’t want to associate with you either.’

At that very moment, the instructor excused himself and dragged Weed into a corner.

“I am sorry. I apologize for her rudeness.”

“No, it’s fine, sir.”

“She’s basically a good girl. She just doesn’t know how to speak. She is the closest thing I have to a baby sister. It seems that she is distrustful of other people. I invited her because I believed she could open her mind to you. Whew.”

“It’s okay, I don’t mind at all.”

Nevertheless, Weed had no reason to extend his hand to this Seoyoon girl. He found it pointless to get to know a murderer, not even an NPC.

“By the way, do you mind if I give a hand to Mrs. Lancer?”

“Are you good at cooking?”

“Not at all. Still, a helping hand is still a hand in the kitchen. She can teach me how to cook.”

“Do as you please.”

As a barbarian by nature, the instructor's wife was a giant. Following her orders, Weed diligently sliced pork sirloin and dipped it in sauce. As he was working hard in the kitchen, Seoyoon rolled up her sleeves and entered the kitchen. She felt ashamed to be the only one sitting idle and alone at the table.

She came up to Weed, stood to one side and watched him chopping the meat. She stepped in to help, but she didn't know what to do first. Weed directed her to a mountain of dishes.

“Clean these dishes, please.”

Weed expected that Seoyoon would turn him down, but to his surprise, she took the dishes and squatted on the floor rinsing them. They earned credit from the hostess for their hard work.

“You are doing well.”

“Thank you, Ma'am.”

“You have gifted hands. Do you want to learn cooking skills?”

This proposal was exactly what Weed had been waiting to hear. Or why would he ever bother soaking his hands?

“Of course, ma'am. Thank you so much for your kindness.”

Ting

New Skill: Cooking

As if something had occurred to her as she watched Weed, Seoyoon also 'asked' the instructor's wife to teach her how to cook with a few deft hand movements.

Cooking Skills— they're simple skills that you can learn anywhere, by paying a membership fee to a chef's guild or by serving an apprenticeship in a restaurant. No doubt it pays off well.

Pork barbecue on a large tray was finally served to the table. It was roasted yellow, steaming deliciously, the scent mingled with reality in the virtual reality. Weed promptly picked up a knife and a fork.

Glare

Suddenly, the instructor took it upon himself to caution Weed.

“You are a guest, Weed-nim. Do not eat too much.”

What kind of host would criticize an invited guest at the dinner table?

He was no longer the manly instructor in the Training Hall. In his place was a vicious Orc exposing his greed for food on the table. An Orc at level two hundred, that is.

But Weed wasn't the type who easily succumbed to blackmail in the face of such food.

"I beg to differ, Instructor."

"You are not agreeing with me?"

Weed felt suddenly pressurized, which was more than he could bear. He felt dazed, and his hand holding the knife was shaky.

'Damn it!' Weed swallowed and glanced sideways.

He had a look at Seoyoon to see how that fragile-looking girl was coping with it. This was the world of a fantasy RPG game. Level rules. She appeared unaffected.

'This girl has at least got to near level two hundred. And the barbarian wife, too,' Weed thought.

The instructor's wife, one of the barbarians who venerated the laws of nature, especially the survival of the fittest, ignored the

plight of weaklings.

Since a barbarian was physically superior to other races, it was only Weed who was threatened by the instructor's murderous intimidation shooting from his eyes. Nobody sided with him.

But this was Weed. Was he not the person who could turn enemies to friends, and friends to apostles?

“Honorable Instructor, please let me speak.”

Fighting off the trembling in his body, Weed just about managed to open his mouth.

“What! If you have anything at all to say, drop the knife and fork first, then we can chat pleasantly until the end of time.”

“Your beautiful wife has displayed such exceptional cooking sense and skill in this meal. I am already intoxicated with the smell, and it fills my head with what it will taste like. Once I eat this, the memory shall be treasured forever.”

The instructor burst into his trademark laughter.

“She is a great cook. I am proud of her.”

“Absolutely. She is your wife, after all. The barbecue looks gorgeous.”

“Oh honey~!”

Mrs. Lancer poked at her husband.

She was apparently flattered by Weed’s sweet compliment.

“True, where else can you get a chance to lay your hands on such a delicious meal? Help yourself, Weed-nim.”

As the saying goes, a wife is the pride of the husband.

The instructor proved he was a sucker when it came to his wife. Anyway, the meal was great. Not only the pork barbecue but also side dishes that the hostess had cooked using recipe from the Northern Province delighted Weed’s tongue.

“Yum, yum. It’s so good, ma’am. You’re the best. I am envious of Mr. Lancer that he can eat your delicious meals every day.”

“True, true,” the instructor said, grinning approvingly.

Weed loosened his belt and eased himself. The instructor laughed heartily, and Seoyoon dutifully finished her plate in silence like a French doll made of ice.

Weed rested for the night in the house, and left for the gate of the Citadel early next morning.

*

Sir Midvale and his troop of thirty foot-soldiers who were dispatched to conquer the Lair of Litvart were encamped near the gate.

“Greetings. Are you Weed-nim?” a knight asked.

“Yes, sir,” Weed said.

A little investigation prior to the quest never hurt. From what Weed had gathered from the streets, Sir Midvale belonged to the Red Order, the key unit of Rosenheim Army, where he had carried out high profile missions. He was recently promoted, as the rumor went, to a Royal Knight. He was a pride of the kingdom, revered as the epitome of chivalry.

“Our destination is far away. It takes about three hours on horseback,” Sir Midvale said.

“ ... ”

All the other foot-soldiers, except for Weed, were riding on brown horses. He was carrying the backpack, and it had never crossed his mind that he needed a horse.

It would not have made any difference if he had been told

otherwise, anyway. A horse was a high-priced commodity that cost at least 100 gold.

“Docke asked me for a favor. So I will lend you a horse for the time being,” Sir Midvale said.

“Thank you, sir,” Weed said.

“Vance, bring the horse.”

A soldier brought a sad-looking colt. It was dragged forcefully by its reins, resisting with its two rear legs. Showing two golden teeth and panting, the colt looked like a deviant rascal.

‘If I ride on that horse, my luck is as good as dead for the next seven years,’ Weed thought wryly.

“Till the mission is finished, this colt will be temporarily assigned to you,” Sir Midvale said.

Ting

Character Name: Arse

Level: 3

Title: Stallion

Type: Neutral

Species: Horse

Fame: -300

Assigned to the punitive force bound to the Lair of Litvart. This quick-witted colt often tries to outfox the owner. It hates water and refuses to gallop in rain. It needs extra care, or it may die of sickness.

P.S:

Beware, he farts often~!

“ ... ”

The stat window for the colt was frustratingly colorful. Weed had once heard that thoroughbreds were difficult, but he found it outrageous that this fragile colt was worse.

“It won’t be for long, but let’s get along, anyway.”

Weed lifted his hand to pat the colt, but it bit his hand immediately.

“How dare you!”

When Weed glared at it, the colt turned around and lowered its rear legs.

“Good boy,” Weed said soothingly.

The moment he climbed on the colt’s back, gagging at a not-so funny smell rising from the not-so-good-looking bottom –the colt suddenly dropped its head forward, then kicked backward with its two rear legs.

“Ouch!”

Weed was thrown by the action and landed on the ground miserably. That single attack took seventy points off his life. Obviously, the colt had tried to kill him with that action.

“You damn Arse!” Weed yelled.

Snort

A bond was formed between Weed and the colt. They stared at each other as if they wanted to wring the other's neck.

"I will never let you get on my back, you stupid human," the colt seemed to say.

"I'll beat you to death someday," Weed's expression said.

An unheard-of face-off between man and beast was taking place.

On the verge of an ugly disaster, Sir Midvale said,

"If you're ready, let's depart now."

Sir Midvale and his troops began to march eastward. Weed hopped on the colt's back quietly and rode on.

*

Seoyoon had also stayed at the instructor's cabin. She could not reject his wife's persistent suggestion to stay over. The next morning She ending up running across Weed several times. When she opened the door of the guest room, he happened to pass by it.

But they didn't make eye contact, pretending not to notice the presence of the other, and excused themselves without greeting.

When Weed left the house, Seoyoon followed him out because she was too embarrassed to be left behind by herself.

With emotionless eyes, she stared at an empty space where he had been standing minutes before.

“Where should I go now?” she asked herself.

“Anywhere I want to go...” she replied.

There was no such place. At the same time, she was free to go anywhere.

‘As long as I can get away from this painful memory.’

Seoyoon began to walk toward the South Gate. Not that she wanted to go there.

She only wanted to go to the wasteland, a land yet to be fully explored, somewhere rampant with monsters.

She had started her journey near the center of the continent, moving to the Western Frontier in search of stronger monsters to fight.

‘I want to see monsters.’

‘I can lose myself while I’m fighting them.’

‘I don’t need to think about anything.’

‘Even the irrevocable truth that I was never loved in my life.’

‘Stop, Seoyoon. Stay strong!’

Even though Seoyoon spoke to no one, it was far from the truth that her mind ceased to function, and it more than willing to talk to itself.

Below the frozen surface however, water was swirling faster as she asked questions of herself, and continued to answer them. However, on the surface, her face was as empty of life as was any sign of expression, it was as though her face was carved from ice.

A repeated conversation here. Said this, heard that. Echoes deep within her mind.

Seoyoon felt less burdened when she fought amid a pack of monsters. Thus, she sought bloody battles in a dungeons full of monsters.

Ever yearning for more stronger and deadlier monsters, she feared no death. She’d never let the blood flow from battle dry out.

A berserker who showed herself worthy of a life soaked in madness and massacre— that was her, always finding peace on a battlefield.

Chapter 07: Maestro of Battles

The Lair of Litvart was at the entrance of Grave Mountains, a three hours trip on horseback from the Citadel.

The colt Weed was riding on occasionally diverted off course, and even chewed on grass leisurely. He had to cajole it to stay on course.

In front of the lair, a soldier who would look after the horses was waiting for them.

“Johnson, take good care of the horses.”

“Yes, sir.”

The punitive force led by Sir Midvale left their horses to the soldier, and entered the lair. Weed was finally relieved of the colt.

“Ready for battle!”

“Set in battle formation!”

The punitive force shielded themselves with steel bucklers and armed themselves with spears and swords. Compared to them, Weed’s equipment was pathetic. An iron sword and a bow.

Sir Midvale in chain mail approached.

“Is that all you have, Weed-nim?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You are poorly armed to fight on the front line. Stay behind and support the troops.”

“Yes, sir.

The troops held the bucklers forward and marched on the lair. Weed followed them from behind.

Making a little headway, they spotted five kobolds that were camping around a bonfire, cooking something. Surprised by the sudden appearance of the troops, the kobolds sprang to their feet.

“Grakht!”

“Enemy! Human attack!”

The kobolds are Level 20 midget-like monsters, below four feet in height, armed with coarse wooden shields and bronze swords.

“Kill! Kill!”

“Drive evil human away! They wreck shelter! Rise! Rise brave kobold warriors!”

When the kobolds rushed out, the soldiers got tense. New recruits, fresh out of boot camps, had not engaged in a battle before. Weed looked toward Sir Midvale, but the knight watched his men with indifferent eyes as if any casualty was acceptable.

‘Isn’t a knight supposed to care if his soldiers die or not? Perhaps he wants them to have firsthand combat experience on their own’ Weed thought.

The soldiers quickly formed a linear formation and charged against the wave of kobolds. A couple of kobolds flung stones with slingshots, but the projectiles barely troubled the troops. Outnumbering the enemy and better equipped, the soldiers gained supremacy over the kobolds with few casualties. Every time a kobold fell, a small piece of metal dropped on the ground.

“Buren, Becker, gather the spoils.”

The two soldiers whose names were called out by Sir Midvale began gathering the metal pieces. They were copper or poorly smelted iron of little value, yet sufficient for farming tools.

One of the reasons why the kingdom operated such a punitive force, other than to train new recruits and restore security to the outskirts was to collect war booty, a creative injection to the budget.

“I need to move in at some point...” Weed said to himself.

On the next battle, he took out the Bow of Theo Grande and aimed at a kobold’s neck.

‘Hold your breath, steady your hands and aim at the target.’

Swish

Weed’s high agility and handicraft skill guided his arrows precisely to the targeted kobolds.

Ting

You have leveled up!

When Weed slew three kobolds, a level-up message window popped up. Those kobolds at a level higher than twenty gave enormous EXPs to Weed who was only at level thirteen.

Every kobold shot by his arrow immediately fell because as he picked those who were nearly drained of life.

Cleverly, Weed sniped at easy game from behind while the soldiers were risking their lives in the front line.

It was a selfish and secure tactic. An arsonist torching a house is more of a saint than the neighbor plundering jewelry and china from the burning house, isn't he?

What Weed was doing was obviously very wicked, taking full advantage of brothers-in-arms bleeding and sweating hard to fight the monsters. A good man would not create such exploitation.

On the other hand, Weed was also very concerned that this tactic could backfire once the soldiers began to notice it and criticize him. Imagine how duped they would feel if a kobold short of a final strike dropped dead because of an arrow from out of nowhere.

Weed only shot kobolds who were running away in a desperate attempt to survive, or when a soldier was helplessly surrounded by two or three kobolds.

Ting

You have leveled up!

Each time a kobold was taken down, Weed smiled gleefully. While the other soldiers were fighting hard in the battles, all he needed to do was to shoot arrows blindly from a safe place. What else was easier than that?

His level was skyrocketing as it was just as fast as the stock price of Google. Weed's scheme to buy the bow right before the quest paid off.

On the way deeper into the lair, they found a wide, open place. Sir Midvale and his men circled around it, slaying kobolds as they were detected, and then returned to the place.

"Take a rest and prepare lunch," Sir Midvale ordered.

"Yes, sir." Buren and Becker rustled to take out large pots and light a fire.

As the youngest in the party, they were made to do chores. Weed walked to them and picked up a knife.

"I'll help you,"

Weed said, smiling sheepishly.

"Oh, no need,"

Becker said.

“Well, I like to cook. I am still an amateur, but wouldn’t it be nice if I serve you brave warriors who are devoting your swords and shields for Rosenheim?”

“It is very kind of you, Weed-nim.”

Weed spontaneously won favor among the soldiers. A man who volunteers to do manual labor on a journey is always highly welcomed. For one thing, Becker and Buren’s attitude toward Weed changed. They couldn’t help but like he who picks up the knife and slices beef.

Of course, he had his own agenda, and it had nothing to do with universal benevolence or whatever. Improve his Cooking skill.

Weed sliced and threw beef in the pot, added vegetables and flavors to make a stew. The ingredients that were needed to serve 32 men were quite a lot. Weed was aware that cooking plenty of food was the short cut to improve his cooking skill as fast as possible.

Ting

Level Up: Cooking (Beginner Lv: 2 | 0%):

Enhances the taste of meals.

Increases speed of recovery of stamina when served.

Increase life when served. (+5% LIFE)

Level Up: Handicraft (Beginner Lv: 7 | 0%):

Enhances your craft skills in every field

Two message windows emerged almost together. Weed’s cooking skill rose while the Handicraft skill that had needed a few experience points for a level up ascended to seven. Two birds with one stone, indeed.

Weed tasted a spoonful of the stew— the privilege of being a chef.

“Excellent.”

Comparing this stew to cheap rye bread that said in any grocery store was an insult. It wasn’t as good as the pork barbecue that he had eaten the other day, but satisfying for his first attempt at catering thanks to his high handicraft skill that compensated the low Cooking skill.

“Everyone! Lunch is ready! Please help yourself.”

The soldiers who felt hungry because of the relentless battles were served a bowl of stew each, which they ate greedily.

“Oh, it’s delicious!”

“I can’t believe a meal could taste so good outdoors!”

“Somehow, I think he’s a better cook than my wife.”

They all gave the thumbs up to Weed. Their reaction told him that they wanted him to keep on cooking for them.

He filled empty bowls with beef stew continuously when asked, and in doing so, his stomach, too.

The soldiers emptied the pot, and when the lunch break was over, Sir Midvale came over to Weed. He asked cordially,

“Weed-nim, would you care to keep serving my men?”

Apparently, even a brave knight valued good cooking. Though, it was more likely that as a revered noble, he was too accustomed to fine meals that he could accept nothing less.

“Yes, sir. I will take care of meals.”

And so, Weed was named the official chef for the punitive force.

He found no reason to decline Sir Midvale's request, as he could upgrade the cooking skill by preparing thirty-two servings of stew three times a day. Furthermore, he wasn't confined to the field of cooking.

"Weapons and armors, I can fix them! Bring me anything damaged or destroyed if you have them."

"Really?"

"Can you really repair my sword?"

"My buckler's half damaged, low in durability..."

"Just show me what you've got. Repair!"

Weed used the repair skill to repair weapons and gear that some soldiers brought to him. It would cost a fortune to have a blacksmith repair damaged equipment back in town. If they were left with low durability, they could suddenly break in the middle of a battle.

"Thank you, Weed-nim!"

Weed was hailed as a savior by the troops. He could upgrade his

handicraft and repair skills, and earned trust from soldiers as a bonus.

Sir Midvale, who had been skeptical of his friend's recommendation to bring Weed along on the mission, was now more than satisfied with his role.

“You’re the man, Weed-nim!”

“Not at all, sir.”

Weed blended in with the rest of the troops.

Who knows what inconveniences they would have to suffered without him. They would have had to return to a nearby village from time to time when they needed to have broken or edge-nicked weapons fixed, and the meals would have been revolted to their stomachs.

Rarely obtained magical items would have needed identification scrolls, which cost several gold coins for each. Instead, Weed could identify them right on the spot with his identification skill.

For the soldiers, it would be torture to go back to the tasteless gruel that Buren and Becker used to claim was beef stew, especially after they enjoyed Weed's version.

“We’re not cooks in the first place!” Buren and Becker cried in unison.

In this way, the soldiers and Weed formed an unimaginable relationship.

Swish

Whenever an arrow flew from Weed, a kobold turned grey.

The kobolds are considered relatively weaker monsters. They know how to use tools, but the class of their tools is crude, as though they were made by children. They basically relied on numbers in a battle.

“Kiyoyo!” A platoon of nine kobolds charged at once.

‘Come on! My precious EXP points!’

A big grin forming on his face, Weed greeted the kobolds with silent cheers. He shot arrows arbitrarily, collecting easy EXPs. Defense was taken care of by the soldiers, anyway. All he needed to do was shoot as many arrows as possible.

Ting

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

New Skill: Archery

This was level-up madness!

Weed had also learned archery, a skill that was commonly exclusive to the archer class. It was hardly surprising, considering that he had done nothing but shoot arrows as he never swung a sword, even once, in the battles.

Nevertheless, the soldiers were not jealous of him in the least. After the battles, Weed was the busiest one there. He cooked meals, repaired weapons and gear and tended the wounded.

Sir Midvale had a few healing potions for emergencies, but the soldiers in the punitive force could not afford such costly medicines. Weed rubbed herbs and rolled gauze on wounds with his handicraft skill.

Ting

New Skill: Bandage

Enables you to stop bleeding and can increase health of the wounded when tended.

The maximum number of skills that a user can learn when his class is undecided is ten.

Weed's bandage skill, was affected by the high handicraft skill, and thus had impressive effects. As he was busy caring for thirty patients every day, the skill upgraded fiercely.

The troops roamed on the first and second floor, slaying kobolds, for a week.

Users were occasionally spotted watching Weed with envious eyes as he was privileged to join a NPC punitive force and hunt monsters alongside them.

The week of slaughtering kobolds upgraded his level to twenty-six. The repair skill hit level three, and the cooking skill, now level four, earned him a special option to increase 50 HP for those who were served with his meals until the satisfaction factor went down.

Still, he had a headache.

“Open Quest Information Window”

Quest: Search and Destroy Operation in the Lair of Litvart [II]:

There are a hundred monsters inhabiting the Lair of Litvart. Kill each and every one of them at least once, and prove yourself worthy of acquiring a honorable class. The completion of this quest will open a right path for your destiny.

Difficulty:Unknown

Quest requirement:

Defeat all of the monsters in the hidden section within the Litvart Lair.

Number of monsters left:100

Regarding the quest that Counselor Rodriguez had, the number of monster that needed to be kill has not decreased at all though Weed had already knocked down hundreds of kobolds.

After a week of warming up on the kobolds, the troops headed to the third floor of the lair— the goblins' territory.

While hunting kobolds had been originally intended to give the new recruits firsthand combat experience, confronting goblins posed a grave threat to their life.

The level of the kobolds were generally in their twenties. The kobold rascals are level twenty-three, and the relatively stronger kobold warriors twenty-eight, but untitled kobolds were at level twenty.

On the other hand, the goblins are level fifty or above. Their weapons and gear surpass what kobolds are equipped with in attack power and in defense. The combat strength of the goblins is five to six times that of the kobolds.

“Watch out now. When you find yourself in danger, retreat immediately.”

“Yes, Commander!”

The soldiers could not hide their excitement and tension. Their levels ranged from twenty-three to twenty-five from hunting kobolds, but their confidence ebbed at the thought of facing an unknown enemy whose level was generally twice theirs. The only relief was that goblins gathered in lesser numbers than kobolds.

“Whew...”

Weed let out an exasperated breath. His stomach curdled at the

thought that if the troops fought goblins at that moment, they would surely suffer inevitable casualties.

‘One third? Or perhaps more? I hope we won’t get annihilated.’

Had Weed been in charge of the troops, he would have taken time to have his men build more experience and level up higher before he led them to the threshold of the goblins, not to mention that he would have taught them how to fight goblins efficiently.

But the command of the punitive force primarily belonged to Sir Midvale. Weed was left with two options. Either he followed them as before, only to sit back and watch them die helplessly, or he give up the quest and hunt more kobolds on his own until he leveled up enough to deal with the goblins. The second option, which would penalize him tremendously, was out of the question.

In fact, the reason Weed was so concerned about the welfare of the soldiers was more of a practical need that he didn’t want to see them die in vain when he worked so hard to build a friendship with them.

“They are coming. Get ready—!” Even before Sir Midvale finished his words, a few goblins dashed out of a cave.

“Kigggg!”

“Human, human!”

“They die!”

There were five goblins. The total number of soldiers outnumbered them 6:1. Weed planned to shoot an arrow at the goblins to take the initiative and to seek another chance afterward — undoubtedly, a goblin yielded a tremendous amount of EXPs, and he was dying to get one.

However, the soldiers were frozen stiff. They stood motionless as if nailed to the ground where they were standing. And fighting spirit radiated from the goblins! The soldiers cowered at the sight of an enemy who was level fifty. Their swords dropped downward, the bucklers trembled unmistakably.

‘Idiots...’ Weed clicked his tongue.

The goblins were not easy to defeat even if the soldiers stood up to fight fearlessly, and now they were already frozen before the battle began. This would lead to a calamity.

Weed shot a glance at Sir Midvale, who was standing beside him. Obviously, the knight wasn’t in the mood to motivate his men.

‘The weak deserve to die.’

The code of chivalry developed in Rosenheim kingdom was cold-blooded. Weed stepped forward. He flung his bow on his back and held the iron sword.

‘I have faith in friendship I’ve worked so hard to build,’ he said to himself.

Then, he did something that was unimaginable to the other soldiers who remembered what he had done in the previous battles. Weed shouted a war cry and charged toward the goblins!

“Yatz!”

Sniggers

Weed’s sword was deflected so easily, instilling a sense of futility in him.

He could make up for a gap between his level and the goblins’ with his inflated stats, but the shorter reach of his sword was critical. The sword wasn’t effective on the goblins that were armed with longer spears.

‘I’m not wearing any defensive gear. If they hit me, I’m dead.’

The goblins blocked Weed’s sword, and almost at the same time, they thrust their spears toward him. He crouched to dodge them. It needed a combination of his amazing reflexes and quick wits to save his life.

He had no intention of fighting the goblins seriously, so his subsequent attacks were half-hearted.

“Die, human!”

“Your sword sucks!”

With five spears, the goblins attacked at random places that were directed by raw instinct.

As long as Weed didn't get close within the reach of his sword, he was free of the risk of being skewered by their spears.

Still, he pretended to be in peril, dodging the spears by inches. To the eyes of the soldiers, the scene looked like a hopeless struggle of the weak.

Even though it had been long since Weed's level transcended theirs, their view of his role was fixed on a handyman working manual labor, such as repairs, cooking and first aid. That Weed was fighting the goblins! The eyes of the soldiers began to flicker with confidence.

After a couple more exchanges, Weed retreated a few steps and then roared in a thunder-like voice,

“Look at them! These goblins are weaker than they appear! Look at us! We outnumber them! You are not alone; we have each other! Our comrades shoulder to shoulder are watching our backs!”

“Hoo-hah!” The soldiers roared as they regained their morale once more.

“It’s a shame on us if we hide behind Weed’s back like mice!”

“Get up—fight!” They charged directly at the goblins.

Weed quickly sensed a forthcoming melee and pulled himself from the battle.

“These bastards are only using spears. If we fight within the reach of spears, it will only cause us more damage. Use your shields. Hold yours bucklers up, marched forward, narrow the gap in between, and prevent them from thrusting their spears freely.”

“Aye!”

“I will follow your command!” some yelled.

Weed gave timely advice in a cordial manner.

Since friendship between them hit maximum, his command was directly taken on board by the soldiers.

They pushed back the goblins by force. Two thirds of them held their bucklers at the front, the rest grabbed the swords.

As the first two lines charged behind the bucklers, the spears that were thrust by the goblins bounced off, astonishing the brainless enemy. Once the gap was narrowed, the sword line began to swing their swords.

Ting

Charisma has risen by 3 points (+3 CHR)

For Weed, who had been resting idly, had his charisma increased by three points. The charisma stat acts over NPC troops, and makes it easier to tame pets or hire mercenaries.

As the soldiers who were motivated by Weed's speech got into action, his leadership was recognized.

Slash

The goblins, in spite of their much higher level, could not defeat the troops, who outnumbered them six-fold.

Their coordinated offense turned one goblin after another into a gray flash.

These Roman legion tactics would have been ineffective when it comes to a battle between armies of equal number of soldiers, but an army of thirty soldiers with bucklers on, charging from four directions, devastated the goblins, which were armed with long spears.

Occasional arrows shot by Weed after he sheltered behind the troops distracted the goblins further.

‘Five goblins! One of them is mine!’

Weed observed the battle scene, and when a goblin was near death, he shot an arrow precisely at the goblin’s neck.

Ting

You have leveled up!

Since Weed had reached level twenty-six, kobolds had not yielded as much EXPs as before. It was still a lot whichever way you looked at it, but was overall too low for Weed.

A goblin belonged to a different dimension than a kobold. When Weed had killed the goblin, it alone filled thirty-seven percent that

remained for the next level, at twenty-seven, and took extra ten percent for change.

‘At level fifty, goblins give much better EXP than kobolds.’

Weed was tempted to kiss the goblin’s ass. Only God knows what he would have done if the soldiers were not around him though. It would be difficult to find a hunting ground better than this.

“We won!” the men cheered.

The soldiers exclaimed in triumph, throwing swords in the air. They were bolstered in confidence that they had successfully defeated the first goblins.

“Goblins are no match for us!”

“No, we won easily because we followed Weed’s command.”

“He has the gift of a leader.”

“He’s excellent in measuring the enemy’s strength.”

“Under his command, our chances of survival will be high.”

When the battle was over, the soldiers complimented Weed, patting his back.

The goddess of fortune was smiling on him! Weed, however, drifted his gaze to Sir Midvale cautiously.

If the knight was offended that his command was violated by a mere foreigner, he had every right to execute Weed without trial, though Weed assured himself that his friendship with the knight would prevent the worst in that case.

Sir Midvale looked at the corpse of a goblin, deep in thought for a moment, and then said to Weed,

“You are a good soldier, Weed-nim. I can see great talent in you. How about taking the path of royal guard?”

“A royal guard?”

“You will become an officer in the honorable army of Rosenheim kingdom. Your starting position will be a Denarion.”

Ting

You have received a job offer!

If you accept it, you will take a military position of Denarion in the Rosenheim army. You will command ten foot soldiers. You are

entitled to receive regular training, and a monthly income of fifty silvers. Will you accept this job offer?

Upon the completion of the regular training, a few basic sword techniques and a quantity of military equipment such as swords and shields are given. Certainly, they are not the sharpest tools in town—an iron sword, or similar, and heavy armor with only defense options.

Weed shook his head because, according to his blueprint, it was too early to settle down in a specific career.

“I am honored you have such a high opinion of me, sir. But I cannot take it. A royal guard is undoubtedly what I aspire to be, but I want to devote myself to wandering freely to help the poor and the weak, and to destroy evil monsters in their lairs for the time being. A wanderer’s blood flows in me, Sir Midvale.”

“Well, so be it. If you ever change your mind, let me know. For now, take command of my men.”

“Can I really do that?”

“It is my duty, but it seems my men follow you, and learn a lot from you. I will watch from behind to see how far your leadership can lead them.”

Sir Midvale transferred the command of the punitive force to Weed.

For now, the soldiers were obliged to obey him at least in this lair. Of course, he did not expect loyalty that could compel them to jump into a pit of flames from a single word.

Weed's charisma was too low, so he counted on his friendship with the soldiers. Still, he was thrilled at his new assignment.

‘Sweet! I’ll make the best out of this situation,’ he said to himself.

Weed swiftly packed the bow, took out the sword and held it up. It was a demonstration of his newly-acquired position. It would have been less impressive to hold the bow, reminding his troops of his past behavior in battles that could not strike them as honorable.

“Listen, soldiers! My name is Weed, and as of now, I take over the command of you. I ask you to follow my orders dutifully.”

“Yes, Commander!”

“My foremost objective is to defeat the lair without any casualties. Do your best, and not a single drop of blood will shed in vain.”

“Yes, Commander!”

Since Weed took over the command from Sir Midvale, the attitude of his troops toward him had changed drastically.

“Buren, Becker.”

“Yes, Commander!”

“You are scouts now. Stay ahead of the army, and look out for enemy in the areas. Even when we are engaged in battle, you must look out for any approaching enemy.”

“Yes, Commander!”

Weed marched his troops with the two scouts leading them. Soon, Buren ran back to him, panting.

“Commander.”

“Speak.”

“Buren reporting, sir! Seven goblins at twelve o’clock. Two female goblins and five goblin raiders.”

Goblin raiders were, according to Weed’s private database, level 58 monsters.

“You did a good job, Buren. Everyone, halt!”

Weed ordered his troops to stay put in an open clearing, and set up a few traps. Then, he went alone to the location where the goblins had been spotted.

As Buren reported, the seven goblins were resting there. Weed took out his bow and shot at the farthest goblin. Before the arrow hit the target, he turned and ran away.

Swish

“Kyah, human!” The goblins looked around, spotted Weed and chased after him in a rush.

Weed knew that, if he was surrounded by the seven goblins, he would not stand any chance. He just prayed his feet would not fail.

Thump

As Weed heard the goblins gaining on him from behind, he shivered.

Holding spears, the goblins were running with heavy strides.

‘God, they even sent a chill down my spine. This is what you call an awesome game. No, the coolest job for me,’he thought to himself.

Although in a dangerous spot, Weed's thoughts were still positive. He was alone, but he would be safe once he reached the place his troops were hiding. Weed ran like his tail was on fire, and arrived at the clearing.

“Commander!”

Buren and Becker were the first faces he saw.

“Get ready for the battle. Goblins are incoming!”

While Weed's call was echoing through the space, the seven goblins sprang out of the cave. In only a moment, their fate would be decided.

“Kugh?”

The goblins that were stupid and witless were mesmerized by the sudden appearance of the soldiers from the rocks they had been taking cover behind. Then they threw burning torches at the goblins.

“These bastards are trapped!”

“Push forward!”

“They have spears. Be careful of their spears! Anyone who is

injured must step down, be it severe or not.”

Had Weed foreseen that he would be in charge of the troops, he would have bought more snares and traps. The best idea he could come up with when there were no other tools was to throw torches at the goblins.

Nonetheless, the soldiers were fighting very well. The thirty troops were a big machine driving the goblins into individual segments and destroying them one after the other. They were strengthened by an incalculable variable called morale.

Whether it comes to monsters or NPCs, morale is always a decisive factor in battles. The soldiers believed in their newly appointed leader, Weed. The Goblins on the other hand, were confused by the torches thrown at them, at the point the goblins realized that they had walked into a trap, they were already surrounded by many humans, so they lost their will to fight back.

“Cheating humans attack us!”

“Kieeekk! Run for life!”

“Who do you think will let you get away alive?”

While the soldiers pushed relentlessly towards their enemy, Weed’s eyes flashed.

“Surround them. Block the entrance of the cave!”

“Yes, Commander!”

“Let the wounded retreat and give first aid. The other soldiers with full life— focus on defense. Those who are healed should remain in the waiting position. You will get ready to join the battle when I give you an order.”

Under Weed’s command, the soldiers immobilized the goblins steadily, two of whom were felled by his arrows.

As he had put his life at risk, he justified that he deserved at least two goblins to make ends meet.

The high-level goblins held on for a considerable period in spite of low morale, but when Weed divided his troops into three groups, and ordered them to take turns exhausting the enemy, the monsters ended up as gray flashes.

The goblins left nine silvers, a steel shield and a bronze spear.

When Buren and Becker picked them up as ordered, Weed interfered.

“Everyone, listen! I am proud of your valor. I will divide spoils in a different manner than before.”

“...?”

“I will reward the soldier who fights the most goblins bravely. On one condition—he cannot be severely injured enough to be disabled for the next battle. My priority is to bring you safely back home to your loving wives and families.”

“Yes, Commander!”

At Weed’s speech, the eyes of his troops filled with admiration.

Ting

Charisma has risen by 2 points (+2 CHR)

Weed would have swallowed all the items if he could, but he kept himself in check. If his friendship with the soldiers dropped, his low charisma could not save him from the possibility of a mutiny, or even a hanging.

Sir Midvale’s presence further weighed on him to bury his unreasonable greed. Leading his troops, Weed systematically cleaned out the goblins on the third floor.

One day, however, Sir Midvale said with a grimace,

“Weed-nim, the pace of the mission is slow. I advise you to pick up the pace.”

“I beg your pardon, sir?”

“I borrowed these soldiers from other regiments. I am not allowed to keep them indefinitely. They must finish the quest within a month, and return to their original regiments.”

Weed had never heard of the deadline. It seemed that only the soldiers were bound to it. Still, he didn't hasten the pace.

Against six or more goblins, he always drew them to the nearest open space by shooting one or two arrows where his troops overwhelmed them. In case of fewer than six goblins, he led them straight to fight with the enemy.

Weed avoided a battle unless the soldiers were fully healed to the last man, and he still made stews and repaired damaged weapons and gear to maintain their condition at their best.

*

When the punitive force succeeded in conquering the third floor of the lair, Weed hit level thirty-seven, and his men thirty-four. There it came. Time for the true hunting

“Charge!”

“Keep the formation! Charge!”

At Weed’s command, the soldiers moved like people who had gone berserk, surrendered to madness. To them, the goblins were as nothing.

“Yatz! Yatz!”

“Death on you! You damn ugly monsters!”

“You cheese-eating dirty frogs. I’ll clean you off the earth.”

The soldiers pushed on with their bucklers ahead. They were as foul-mouthed as ever, this was because Weed had taught them four-letter words from Rodriguez’s dictionary.

They sometimes roared menacingly, and charged under apparently impossible circumstances. Their swords became more dynamic, penetrating openings of the goblins that were armed with spears.

Weed still maintained the same formation for his troops, but ultimately they relied on their comrades, they were more reckless this way, but they were also faster. They had slain goblins repeatedly, leaving thousands of corpses behind them.

Adopting Weed's tactics aggressively, his troops crushed the goblin defenses with thoroughly coordinated attacks.

Now it took just the blink of an eye to destroy a platoon of six goblins as an army of thirty veteran soldiers rushed on fiercely and devastated the enemy.

"Battle is won. Let me distribute items based on individual prowess. Hosram and Dale."

"Yahoo!"

"Any soldier who needs a repair or a rest?"

"No, Commander!"

"None!"

"Then, let's move on. Scout, report!"

Buren and Becker, in turn, scouted and reported the location and number of the nearest goblins.

"Becker reporting, Commander! Eight goblins have been located a hundred yard away at nine o'clock. One goblin alchemist, six goblin warriors, and one plain goblin."

“Advance!”

The soldiers now ran at a comfortable pace, neither fast nor slow. They were lightly jogging, as they were recovering from battle fatigue and preparing for the next upcoming battle.

“Hu... humans!?”

“Enemy, kill them all!”

The goblins began to put up a little bit of resistance, but it was almost meaningless at this stage.

The soldiers, who were now veterans in combat and experience, already dominated the goblins in morale— add Weed’s arrows in, and it was a death sentence for the goblins.

His level in archery rose quickly as he was actively engaged in battle, and his arrows were no longer aimed only at dying goblins.

Weed now shot arrows in order to take the initiative, and when goblins were grouping to break through his men’s encircling net, he hindered their movement with warning shots. The main target though, was any goblin that threatened the life of one of his troops.

Imagine that when a goblin’s spear is flying at you, your leader’s arrow bores a hole in its head, then you will feel saved and thus more loyal to him, wouldn't you? The same logic went for a

number of soldiers whose life were saved by Weed at the last second.

His troops hunted goblins in the most efficient and time-saving way possible now. They conquered the fourth floor faster than the third one, and even kept the same pace on the fifth one where they encountered a score of goblins in each battle.

As the soldiers were mature in combat skills, giving them the status of veteran at a high level, they were capable of one-to-one combat with goblins.

Nevertheless, Weed stuck to the old tactics of focusing on defense and outnumbering goblins. Some of his men got cocky and suggested to him that they drop it and, instead, fight goblins fairly on a level playing field.

Weed stood his ground, though.

“Do not consider that filthy goblins deserve fair play! Have you ever heard of a knight asking for a duel with monsters? If there were one, he would be stupid to defend his honor against monsters. We are fighting them in order to restore peace and protect the people of Rosenheim. Keep in mind that if you hesitate to put an end to a goblin because you are trying to be ethical, your comrades will pay the consequences!”

Weed’s charisma controlled his small force of thirty men.

One who fought a goblin alone was denied his share of recognition. He was later excused from the next battle. He was at first excited to stay out of danger, but soon realized that he had to sit back and watch his comrades leveling up.

This example taught everyone a lesson, so the troops went as far as stabbing goblins in the back if it became available. They were brainwashed beyond a doubt by Weed's silver tongue, which was now teaching these hardened soldiers, Infantry Combat Tactics 101.

For less than a month, Weed led the punitive force to sweep over the Lair of Litvart. As a week was still left, they went back down to the third floor, and on the way back to the bottom, rooted out regenerated goblins.

Once a battle began, the soldiers spread in wings, formed an encircling formation and slew their foe within a few breaths. As soon as the battle was over, they advanced to the next one.

Blitz

Not one soldier died.

They finished the Search and Destroy Operation of The Lair of the Litvart quest with the overall levels of the troops reaching fifty-seven, to Weed's sixty-two. Considering that the average level of Denarions in the Rosenheim Army was forty, what Weed had accomplished was terrific.

“Good job, Weed-nim. You have done a great service to us.”

Sir Midvale didn’t hide the fact that he marveled at Weed.

“If we had five more men of your courage and leadership, then Rosenheim kingdom wouldn’t ever be harassed by monsters. By the right of a royal knight, I hereby wish to appoint you Centurion. Would you accept my proposal, Weed-nim?”

Ting

You have received a job offer!

If you accept it, you will take a military position of centurion in the Rosenheim army. You will command one hundred foot soldiers. You are entitled to receive regular training, and a monthly income of three gold. Will you accept his job offer?

An officer in command of a hundred troops, a centurion is deemed to be a sub-knight who is qualified to embark on an annual trial of promotion to knighthood in the Red Order.

If it were other users, they would have accepted it willingly, but Weed wasn’t swayed.

“I’m glad to hear that, Sir Midvale, but this is more than I can accept.”

“Freya forbids it! Tell me if you want additional benefits, Weed-nim. I believe we can find common ground.”

“Your offer is... beyond my dearest wish. But all I want is peace and prosperity in Rosenheim Kingdom. As my heart leads me to travel to many places and to help the many of those in need, it still seems too early to settle down. If you have another mission to destroy monsters after the autumn harvests, or if Rosenheim is invaded, I will be the first one to run to you and offer my service to command courageous soldiers in the Rosenheim army.”

“Your spirit is well understood, Weed-nim. The door to the Royal Army will be always open to you.”

Sir Midvale withdrew his proposal with a content look.

“Now that we have finished the quest, I am leading them back to the Citadel. Will you join us?”

“I have something to be done here, sir.”

“May I inquire as to its nature?” Sir Midvale looked curious.

For the last four weeks, Weed had made thirty-two servings of

stew three times a day. His experienced cooking skill delivered great food on time, and Sir Midvale was one of the beneficiaries who had fallen in love with it, forming a solid friendship with him.

“I must take care of a quest for the sake of Counselor Rodriguez.”

Weed had assumed that the annihilation of the goblins would meet the quest’s requirement, but it was a serious miscalculation on his part.

The numbers of monsters that he was supposed to destroy was still a hundred without any sign of decrease. Anyway, the number of goblins in the lair was hundreds on each floor, at a conservative estimate.

Rodriguez’s quest was to sweep away all the ‘monsters’ in the Lair of Litvart, and the kobolds and goblins were not possibly the target because as they greatly outnumbered a hundred.

“I see, Weed-nim. A quest by the Counselor... I understand. I was looking forward to returning to the Citadel with you, but it seems destiny directs us to part our ways here. Instead, I will lend you Arse.”

“Arse? Whose arse?”

“Have you already forgotten the name of the horse you rode here the other day?”

“Don’t tell me...”

Weed’s head suddenly felt thick and heavy. The colt that had kicked him with two rear legs and bit his hand! Now he remembered the colt’s name was Arse!

What a shameful name for a would-be stallion.

“The trip to the Citadel will cost you valuable time without a horse. Arse is at your service.”

“Thank you, but no thank you, sir. I don’t need any horse.”

“I am only returning your favor, Weed-nim. Please take it. Return it to the Royal Stable when you finish your quest.”

“ ... ”

Sir Midvale turned as soon as he delivered what he wanted to say. His attitude implied that there was nothing else to hear, case closed. The knight meant well for Weed’s sake, but he wanted none of it. How in the world could he stand such a wild colt?

Weed absolutely hated this pain in the butt, but he had to accept it, or he would make the royal knight lose face once again.

“Commander, we’ll miss you!”

“We're all going home alive, thanks to you Commander!”

“Please visit my place when you come to the Citadel.”

“I run an inn in the central avenue. You're always welcome.”

“My family owns a restaurant. My wife will serve you a delicious meal, though it's not as good as yours!”

The soldiers came up to Weed and said farewell.

As high-level veterans, they would probably be promoted upon their return, at least, to Denarions while one or two soldiers who score the best could look for a better position.

Weed shook the hand of every soldier who used to be his subordinate. His hand was warm, and its grip held on for a few seconds.

“Do you really have to leave?”

“I want to stay here with you, Commander, but I'm a proud soldier of Rosenheim Army. I must return to my regiment.”

“Commander, I will miss you!”

Weed's eyes shone darkly with reluctance. What troubles he had

gone through to train those soldiers! He was the first to have credit for transforming once new recruits at level twenty something into hardened veterans in combat skills. Now Weed felt as though he were being robbed of them by the kingdom.

“Everyone, safe trip!” Weed said.

“Godspeed, Commander.”

“Commander, you must stop by in my place later!”

After reluctant farewells with his former troops, Weed was left alone.

Chapter 08: The Fated Profession

As was his routine, Rodriguez was taking an afternoon walk. He enjoyed checking on his neighbors and deepening their misery.

“How are you, Hans?”

“Fine, Counselor.”

“What is the best fruit today?”

“This one. Please have some. Fresh strawberry, sire.”

“Thank you.”

Rodriguez’s steps were light. For one thing, he wasn’t pestering others who fell under his gaze that afternoon. He was elated by the recent publication of the latest book he had penned.

When he returned home, his manservant in care of the manor was waiting at the entrance to greet him. He spoke without reservation to the manservant whose dedication to his family lasted for decades.

“How was your walk, milord?”

“Excellent. Very excellent. These days are free of worries and

trifles.”

“I’m glad to hear that, milord. By the way, do you mind if I ask you a question?”

“What is it, William?”

“This is about the young man who carved statues on the other side of the street, milord.”

“Oh, that kid!”

“Did he find what he was seeking?”

Rodriguez laughed evilly.

“It’d never be that easy.”

“Then...”

“Not a chance! He won't even be able to find the place, and even if he does find it, against all odds... well... ”

“ ... ”

“Serves him right even if he gets the class!” Rodriguez burst into insane laughter.

*

The first thing that Weed did when he was alone was double-check his armor and inventory.

“Twenty-four gold and thirty silvers...”

Instead of receiving his share of the spoils that his men had collected from the slain kobolds and goblins, which were mostly crude weapons, equipment and pieces of metal, Weed had asked for hard money.

“The revenue’s not too bad, and...”

For the last month, Weed had advanced his skills by far. His cooking mastery hit level six, the repair skill four. The repair skill is so useful that some users are encouraged to pick it up, but the cooking skill is almost extinct, except for professional cooks.

Weed’s bandage skill, now level four, empowered him to tend a minor injury by rolling gauze twice. But the most progressive one among his stats was his level.

He felt like laughing.

Sniff

To Weed's dismay, however, Arse whinnied unpleasantly. He had no choice but to take care of the colt thanks to the 'courtesy' of Sir Midvale. The colt was good for nothing for now, but Weed was obliged to return it safely to the Royal Stable.

'The Lair of Litvart. No other lair of the same name has been discovered so far. This is the place.'

The Counselor's trick.

Assured that there was something behind it, Weed did his best to analyze the quest's objective from different angles.

'It must be hidden somewhere in the lair, somewhere no one has found yet – a secret chamber.'

Weed began working through from the first floor up to the fifth one.

For the adventuring classes, such as rangers and explorers, which are endowed with a multitude of observation-related stats and skills, it is easier to discover a concealed entrance.

But Weed could only stick to elementary means such as relying on his naked eyes and touching every suspicious area with his hands in order to look for the 'secret chamber'.

There were at least twenty users on each floor in the Lair of Litvart. Hunting monsters, they commented about Weed, who was

acting weird.

“What’s that guy doing?”

“Seems he’s looking for some entrance. Why else would he caress the stone wall so dearly?”

“Puhaha, what an idiot. The lair doesn’t have any secret passage.”

“This is the first lair found when Rosenheim was discovered months ago. Thousands of adventurers stormed here. He’s taking a gamble.”

“Just your typical creep.”

They openly laughed at Weed, because they had been jealous of him who was surfing on an easy wave in the lair with thirty NPC troops, it was no surprise that he was the center of jealousy and envy.

“Just in case...”

“Watch out. Don’t let him notice we’re behind him.”

Several users followed Weed quietly, envisioning that he might have overheard valuable information from the NPC soldiers during the mission. Or better, he might be carrying out a special quest. In

that case, they even considered forcing Weed to share the quest.

In their eyes, this one lone freak was a low-level archer, lacking in melee combat skills; who had worked on household chores for the troops and sponged off them like a parasite.

After a week had passed without event, the troublemakers were exasperated by tracking Weed in vain; he was obsessed with exploring the lair inch by through inch, so they finally gave up and left.

“Nutcase!”

“BAH! I’m freaking mad. I’ve just wasted these last few days!”

Even after they left him alone, Weed continued. ‘There’s gotta be something.’

Many explorers had already finished mapping out the entire lair, and had already concluded that there was nothing left to find. This was exactly what Weed was told aswell. In fact, he had done occasional research while hunting down the kobolds and goblins, but failed to make any meaningful discovery. Still, Weed was convinced that he would stumble onto something someday.

‘Famous adventurers from all over the continent have already searched this place. So what? You’re wrong; and I’m right?’

The Lair of Litvart was a vast place. Wandering casually in the

forlorn hope of uncovering a hidden place was a hope as far as the distance between the Earth and Andromeda.

Even though the many of adventurers were better with their own observation skills, attitude and persistence could make difference.

Weed patiently touched the lair walls, looking for a clue.

Sniff

Arse watched Weed with contempt.

He had brought the horse into the lair because there was no one else who could, or would, look after it, but due to this, he was becoming very stressed out by the disobedient beast.

‘I need to teach him a lesson first.’ Weed thought evilly.

Weed led Arse to a shelter of goblins on purpose—a goblin warrior and three goblin raiders. As soon as they saw Weed, they charged at him.

He stepped forward as if to protect the colt in front, and fought against the goblins, screaming:

“My god! I don’t want to die!”

The goblin warrior's spear sailed toward Weed but only grazed him, drawing little blood from the flesh.

“If... if I am killed now, what will ever happen to my dearest Arse...”

The goblins kept on pounding on Weed.

“No! I shall stand here to protect Arse! Bring it on, you abominable monsters! You must pass over my dead body before you lay any of your filthy fingers on him!”

Weed played a brave knight protecting his weak companion at risk of his own death.

When he glanced back, however, he saw that the colt was yawning and playing with a pebble on the ground. Also, Weed noticed that this beast was ready to bolt in the direction of the Lair's exit the moment the master fell dead.

“Damn you!” he swore at the colt.

Weed was embarrassed by this turn of events. Why make a fool of himself to win over a mere colt?!

Slash

Weed slew the pestering goblins with a single swing of his sword.

He was tempted to behead the beast altogether, but losing Sir Midvale's trust was too big a risk.

Sniff

Arse gave Weed a contemptuous look as if to ask 'why he had bled needlessly when he could finish them so easily?'

'Damnit! I feel like a fool to after liking that. Ahhh... patience, patience.' Weed thought to himself

Weed went back to the exploration of the lair.

Three days later, on the tenth day of his private exploration to be precise, he found a cavity in a dark corner on the fourth floor where goblin raiders were regenerated. It was located ten yards deeper than the regenerating point. Even the most cautious ranger would have overlooked it. Below a large rock projecting outward, the cavity was shadowed, away from human eyes.

"Is there anyone there~?" Weed asked cautiously.

Looking around, Weed made sure that there was nobody else sneaking up on him. Those who had trailed him for a week were long gone, but excessive caution never hurt.

If this cavity turned out to be what Weed had been looking for,

he would be the first man to discover it, and he didn't want to share the credit with anyone else.

For the first explorer who discovers an unknown area, the rewards are immense. He earns fame, plus double EXPs and a higher rate of item provision for a whole week after the discovery. Weed crept into the cavity carefully. The gap was narrow enough to be mistaken for a crevasse between rocks, and the interior widened little by little on each step. He soon reached a passage where he could move comfortably. A humid, foul smell pricked his nose.

Tense, he got ready for a battle. He didn't have any clue as to what was coming next, so he held the iron sword in the right hand with a death grip, and herb and bandages in the left one.

‘Bring it on!’

Weed walked slowly deeper into the cave.

Along the cave were several forks. He picked the left one and entered it, only to find a gigantic worm at a dead end.

“What the heck... what kind of monster is this!? I've never seen this sort of worm—!!!”

Before Weed could finish his words, the surroundings underwent a sudden change.

What he thought to be the blackish ground was, in truth, a floor of little bugs the size of pinkies.

Squirm

Like Moses breaking apart the Red Sea, the bugs scattered and then came back to attack Weed, crawling menacingly.

“What the!?!— How dare you!” Weed swung the iron sword like a windmill.

Covered in disturbingly crunchy shells, the good news was that the little bugs were almost harmless with their low attack power, however, the queen-like worm bore offspring faster than he could exterminate them. Right now, he really missed his men in the punitive force.

“I’d ended this mess way earlier if I only had them here!” Weed muttered under his breath.

Suddenly, the queen bug spewed light green smoke fumes. Like a drop of black ink dispersed in transparent water, the fumes slowly spread in the cramped and enclosed space, eventually reaching where Weed was standing.

The moment he inhaled it—

Ting

You have been poisoned!

Your life is decreasing continuously.

Startled, Weed checked his life gauge.

Gasp

His life was decreasing by one point per second.

“Damn... I don’t have any antidote! If it keeps going...”

In desperation, Weed ignored the annoying little bugs, ran to the queen and struck it with the iron sword. On the first strike the queen worm’s hard carapace shell cracked, and yellow fluid slowly oozed out.

“If I’m going to die, I’m taking you with me!”

Weed neglected the bugs that were crawling up and biting him. Regardless whether they bit him or seconds passed by, he was dying anyway!

Torn between two choices, it was better to kill the queen and get the heck out of there. As if they sensed that their mother was dying, the little bugs crowded Weed aggressively, but his iron sword was persistent. The shell of the queen worm was so hard that, though the outer shell was partly cracked, she was alive and well. Meanwhile, Weed's head was swimming dizzily.

‘I’m gonna die here. If only I had a combat skill... skill? Why didn’t I think of that!’

The skill that Weed had never been given a chance to use! He had a combat skill that sucked so much mana from him that he could not sustain it longer than a second. Whether it worked or not, the situation was hopeless enough.

“Sculpting Blade technique!” Weed’s iron sword blazed white. It temporarily overpowered the enemy’s defense.

Crack

Finally, the gigantic worm’s hard shell shattered into pieces.

Ting

You have leveled up!

Weed skipped the message window and yelled,

“Open Quest Information Window”

Quest: Search and Destroy Operation in the Lair of Litvart [II]:

There are a hundred monsters inhabiting the Lair of Litvart. Kill each and every one of them at least once, and prove yourself worthy of acquiring a honorable class. The completion of this quest will open a right path for your destiny.

Difficulty:Unknown

Quest requirement:

Defeat all of the monsters in the hidden section within the Litvart Lair.

Number of monsters left: 99

Though he was poisoned and dying, Weed smirked.

“I did it!”

Weed had finally found the answer for the class change. It was these damn worms in the cave. He had to kill the queens, not those little bugs.

“First thing first though, I need to cure myself of the poison...”

Chased by the little bugs, Weed left the cave in a hurry. When he saw they could not cross over the boundary of the cave, he began to walk slowly toward the ground level with the colt.

When a user is poisoned, their face darkens.

Weed avoided contact with other users to conceal that he was poisoned, and recharged his life a little by rubbing herbs on his body and stuffing himself with pre-cooked meals.

If he tried, he would surely find a party that had a priest. But he would rather die than ask for help. Was Weed too proud to bargain for his life?

Nonsense!

There were no poisoning monsters in the Lair of Litvart. Neither kobolds nor goblins had any knowledge of poisonous substances,

let alone used them.

His so called ‘savior’ would probably want to know where Weed had been poisoned, and by whom or what— and would ask with deeply suspicious eyes. He would rather die than share with others the whereabouts of the secret chamber that he had found after a long time of painstaking searching and tribulation. Once he arrived at the exit above the ground, he jumped up onto the colt...

“Go to the nearest village Arse, quickly, or I’ll pass out and then die!”

Sniff

The stupid beast didn’t even budge an inch. It was acting as if it was taking some small amount of sadistic joy from the misfortune of it’s current master, or simply me to be more specifically. As such, Arse pretended to be deaf while he lazily scuffed his hooves in the soil while he continued to leisurely chew on some grass.

“If you’re going to be like that, then...”

The last dregs of Weed’s patience had finally ran out.

“You’ve left me without any other options.”

Weed took out the sculpting knife.

Arse looked terrified at the sight of that sharp object, but soon calmed down as if it knew Weed was only bluffing.

Instead of slashing at Arse, Weed cut his own forearm with the knife. Did he lose his sanity enough to become self-destructive when his life was already in jeopardy because of the poison gas?

“Hoho!”

Weed grinned treacherously, and although his vision was already blurring around the edges of his sight as a result of anemia, he set his devilish plan into motion. As quick as a viper, he clutched the colt’s jaws and forced them to open and then forced the colt to drink some of his blood.

“Look! Now that you’ve sipped some of my blood, you’re poisoned as well now. You need to take me to a village, or we’re both dead. Fortunately for me, I will be able to resurrect soon, you on the other hand, will never get a second chance at life, got it?”

With this bit of mutual motivation, the colt finally galloped to the village, and although its speed wasn’t any faster than before, they still arrived in time. Luckily, while he was teetering on the brink of death, upon arriving at the nearest village, Weed was quickly able to find a priest to cast a cure spell on him. After getting cured, he purchased herbs and antidotes worth twenty gold. Though his pockets were now empty of money, he had no remorse.

Weed quickly returned to the Lair of Litvart, and only after he

was certain that nobody was watching him from the perimeter, did he entered the hidden section of the cave where the worms dwelled.

He even brought Arse in there. He was afraid that other users might steal it, well try to, and while the idea to get rid of it by someone else's hands was more than tempting, he didn't want to know what would happen if he failed to return the colt to the Royal Stable as was requested, so this took priority.

“Always stay behind me.”

Arse swayed its tail resignedly.

Weed began to slay only queen worms. The tiny little bugs gave as much EXPs appreciable to their size, and the way that they crawled out at him from everywhere made it costly to attack each of them. So with this in mind he only attacked the queens.

As no sword master could catch raindrops falling from the sky, Weed ignored the tiny bugs that covered the entire floor like a murky colored carpet.

“Sculpting Blade technique!”

The mysterious sword technique from Zahab.

It crushed the enemy's shell with powers that directly disintegrated the nature of an object, regardless of resistance and

defense. Sometimes, Weed encountered bigger queen worms and needed two or three strikes, between which he rested to refill mana.

He was poisoned and repeatedly attacked by the little bugs. With life decreasing rapidly, Weed always barely escaped; death had never been so close nor so often for him.

The more he slew queens in the cave, the more blankly dismayed he felt. Who would believe this was a quest for class change? Most users choose their primary class long before they hit level ten.

On the other hand, Weed was level sixty-two, and this cave was still a life-and-death challenge to him. He only wondered what kind of class required so much hassle.

“Open Quest Information Window”

Quest: Search and Destroy Operation in the Lair of Litvart [II]:

There are a hundred monsters inhabiting the Lair of Litvart. Kill each and every one of them at least once, and prove yourself worthy of acquiring a honorable class. The completion of this quest will open a right path for your destiny.

Difficulty:Unknown

Quest requirement:

None

Number of Monsters Left:1

At the end of seven days of vicious and almost continuous battle, Weed had only one more to kill. The Queen of Queens! She was easily five times bigger than the other Queen Worms!

When Weed entered her throne room without any precaution, he was accorded a cordial reception of thick green fumes of poisonous gas that the Queen of Queens had retained just for him.

He would have let it hit him under other circumstances, but he jumped back under a vague hunch.

Melt

The little bugs that were touched by the fumes rotted in seconds and melted into tiny puddles on the cave floor.

“What awful poison!” Weed’s heart had skipped two beats.

The only way to stay away from the poisonous gas was using the bow from a distance. But his arrows could not penetrate the thick hardy shell of the Queen Worm. So his only option was to approach within reach of her poisonous gas.

The Queen Worm knew well of Weed's current dilemma, and with a mouthful filled of poisonous gas, waited for him to get close so she could shower it all over him.

Like a rattlesnake waiting coiled for a chance to strike, the Queen Worm and Weed faced each other, motionless.

‘She can shoot thick fumes only once. If I can dodge the first one, the second one will be much lighter. So the initial shot will be decisive.’

Weed's eyes glittered when he saw a treasure has stashed behind the queen worm.

‘I will never, ever give up here. If only I had someone who I could sacrifice to the poison gas... Ah... right, I think I've found the answer,’ Weed thought, as his eyes narrowed to slits and a wolfish smile spread on his lips.

At the end of his gaze lay dumb-eyed Arse.

Punt

Weed kicked the colt's ass right away. Arse plunged forward

instinctively, and the queen worm reflexively puffed out the poison gas toward it.

‘I’m sorry, Arse, but destiny’s got you. Life isn’t fair, and I’m afraid that this is the end of our relationship.’

Weed could not afford the luxury of watching the fate of the poor beast.

As soon as he made sure that the poisonous gas that had been stored in the Queen Worm’s mouth was fully launched, he rushed toward her.

“Sculpting Blade technique! Double dance!”

Weed swung the sword wildly until his mana ran out.

With the iron sword in the right hand, and the sculpting knife in the left, he tore the shell off the Queen Worm.

Left without any worthwhile combat skills, this was the best option for Weed. The queen worm struggled, but her gigantic size got in the way as he was too close to her.

Moan

She finally closed her beady eyes shut. Then, a key dropped from her body.

“This is it!”

Weed picked up the key, inserted it in the keyhole of the treasure box and turned it clockwise. What he found in the box a few volumes of books and a parchment scroll.

Ting

Item: The Successor to the Legendary Emperor [I]:

I am Geihar Von Arpen, the first emperor of the Continent, the one who put an end to timeless divisions.

My final years of life have been far from fulfilling.

No one has recognized my distress, my superiority!

Why does no one understand my profession? Why does everyone look down upon my profession with disrespect?

Enslaved to their prejudices, the talented have refused to understand my goodwill and succeed me in my trade. Even with my children, this form of prejudice is true!

Those imbecilic and senseless bunch!

They do not deserve to be my successor!

So, I entrust my secret trade to you.

The Emperor Geihar was the first and only man to have ruled over a unified empire in the history of the Versailles Continent.

Unfortunately, after his death, the empire was divided once again, thus shaping the present map, but his achievements were recorded as legendary.

Weed was thrilled.

‘So, there were idiots even back then too! They should have known better. It’s an excellent opportunity... Who was the Emperor Geihar? He’s none other than the first man to conquer the entire continent with his own powers, and this is his class! It must be damn good, but they judged it superficially.’

Ting

Hidden Class!

If you accept it, you can use exclusive skills related to the nature of the class.

Do you want to convert now?

Yes | No

Weed yelled without hesitation, “Of course!”, and in that moment, his avatar was enveloped in light.

Character Name: Weed

Alignment: Neutral

Profession: Legendary Moonlight Sculptor

Title: None

Level: 68

Fame: 250

Health: 3460

Mana: 340

Strength: 235 (+20)

Agility: 200 (+20)

Vitality: 89 (+20)

Wisdom: 16 (+20)

Intelligence: 24 (+20)

Fighting Spirit: 97 (+20)

Endurance: 129 (+20)

Art: 29 (+100)

Charisma: 68 (+20)

Luck: 5 (+20)

Offence: 170

Defense: 30

+20 points add to all stats (+20 ALL STATS)

+80 points added Art (+80 ART)

+30% increase to Stats on Moonlit Nights

Gained ability to equip and use class specific items

Gained ability to learn all craft skills to the stage of a Master

Crafting skills are optional and advanced skills are available

Grants extra options to items that are produced or refined

Increases Attack Power for the Sculpting Blade technique

Decreases Mana Consumption for the Sculpting Blade technique

Enables you to learn secret skills based on your level in Sculpture Mastery

Increases Fame rapidly by creating statues of extraordinary beauty or artistic value

Weed finally got the class that he had been fighting for, but when he saw the name of his new class, he almost collapsed in mortification.

“WHAT!? Damn it! Not a ‘Moonlight Sculptor!’” he raged.

*

After all his blood and sweat, it all went back to Moonlight Sculptor.

It was actually ‘Legendary’ Moonlight Sculptor with a flattering prefix, but Weed didn’t give a damn about it. The cursed, poverty inducing profession, Moonlight Sculptor!

“Why... why me?” he moaned bitterly as clear tears gushed out of Weed’s eyes.

He smelt what was left of the poisonous gas that the queen worm had breathed out in her last struggle at the moment of death, but it wasn't what prompted the floodgates in his eyes to break down.

He had no choice but to accept this God-forsaken class of 'Moonlight Sculptor'.

"I should've chosen a common warrior class."

Weed, who had just moments before laughed at the fools who had refused to comprehend the Emperor Geihar's profession, now blamed the Emperor for duping him into converting to Moonlight Sculptor. He wasn't at all convinced.

'Why is life so hard on me?'

Weed was weeping in self-pity.

He had spent an entire week sitting down in the middle of the street to stimulate Rodriguez's curiosity, and more than seven weeks in the Lair of Litvart to find this cavity and crush the disgusting Queen Worms living within. All that effort was wasted on converting to Moonlight Sculptor!

Weed wanted to cry his heart out.

Yet he had improved his handicraft skills and sculpture mastery, and earned massive revenue during his sit-in in front of Rodriguez's manor; he had leveled up at a frightening pace in the

lair – conveniently, all of this escaped him now.

Only the cold reality was left to him, now he was a Moonlight Sculptor, and it grieved him. He just wanted to scream and rage that it was so unfair.

After a long moment of crisis, though, Weed's eyes finally regained some light in realizing what he had missed amid his flood of misery.

“It's not as bad as it looks...”

He had thought that he hit the bottom, but as he calmed down, he was seeing the other side.

Warriors, rangers and priests are the top three classes, which means that they have been tried and proven better than the other classes.

For the warrior and ranger class, they are given a 50% bonus attack power when they're armed with their weapon of choice according to their subclasses. The priest class can learn and cast holy spells that no other class but the paladin class can tap into.

This was why Weed's overall damage with a sword was less than his counterpart the warriors class, and the ruled applied to his attack power with arrows that could not rival that of a full-time ranger.

Therefore, a hidden class, whose secrets no has yet figured out on their own through trial and error, heavily relies on the way they're brought up. If they're properly developed with a focus on the class's merits and characteristics, it should come off well. If not, it will probably turn out to be mediocre, and no better than a common class if not worse.

Weed hastily turned his attention back to the scroll. There were still a few more paragraphs that he had yet to read:

Ting

Item: The Successor to the Legendary Emperor [II]:

I love beautiful statues. The statues that are carved with the magnificent spirit of Kvasir have never forsaken me. As long as I love and trust them, they are loyal to me.

Who would believe this? That this lowly 'Sculptor' class became the cornerstone of my power, from a humble farmer in a country town to the man who united the Continent.

Listen well, my successor who walks in the path of a sculptor.

A very difficult path awaits you. The path that a hundred out of a hundred men shall give up and a nation of men will not fare any better.

However, my successor, I encourage you to stay the course in the face of the toughest challenges. Hardship brings a value of its own, and toughness produces a result of its own too.

Become the Grand Master of Sculpting!

You must learn the secrets of Sculpture Mastery which I failed to learn. It shall remain the wish of every man who has learned the sculptural art.

therefore, I hereby entrust to you these small gifts.

Emperor Geihar, the conqueror of the earth, sea and the sky, had done so through the use of Sculpture Mastery.

After Weed had finished re-reading the scroll, he then checked on the other items within—three tablets and a book.

The effects of the tablets were not recorded anywhere but he knew what skill to use in this situation.

“Identify”

You failed to identify the item!

You failed to identify the item!

You failed to identify the item!

Item: A Medicine Tablet of the Emperor:

This tablet is made from a variety of very rare herbs by an ancient emperor, to clear the mind when it is taken.

Effect:

Permanently increases Mana (+200 Mana)

After a series of failed attempts, Weed was finally able to identify one of the treasure items.

It was rare— no, more valuable than simply rare— this item increased the amount of mana permanently by two hundred points!

The tablet smelt of an indescribably comforting fragrance. Weed

estimated the price for a single tablet to be no less than ten thousand gold.

Since the tablet permanently increased the maximum amount of mana, instead of simply recovering mana temporarily like mana potions did from the market, they were worth such an eye-popping price.

“Thank you so much. I admire your generosity, your Imperial Majesty.”

Weed put down the tablet and picked up the book next.

“Does it contain great skills? It should! I don’t think more bad fortune will strike me again after I suffered these setbacks. No, I cannot be that unlucky!”

This time again, Weed succeeded in figuring out the content of the book just when he was about to give up trying after scores of failure message windows.

“Identify”

Item: The Book of Secret Sword Techniques from the Imperial Family of Arpens:

Emperor Geihar Von Arpen recorded the Flawless Sword Techniques on behalf of the Imperial Family's perpetuity and prosperity.

This book is composed of five movements and one footstep.

All members of the Imperial Family were, by origin, knights. So the skills are generally restricted to the Knight class, but the Emperor Geihar Von Arpen considered his successor in Sculpture Mastery, so he refined the skill for a Sculptor to learn a weakened version of the skill.

Surprised, Weed almost dropped the book.

“This, this color is—”

The Book of Secret Sword Techniques was flashing in gold when it was identified.

It meant that the book was a rare skill book! Moreover, it was an A-grade sword technique book.

“You're so generous, Your Imperial Majesty. Thank you for giving me an A-grade sword technique book!” Weed said.

Though, It was still a little disappointing that the skill book

wasn't a unique or S-grade one.

Still, it was questionable that Weed, now a sculptor, could learn such a high level of sword techniques even if he had found one.

S-grade sword techniques in general have a requirement for certain classes, mostly sword warriors or knights.

As Weed didn't have many decent combat skills, this book was like raindrops in a drought.

The days of basic sword skill and archery! They would be gone now, and soon only a distant memory.

Weed put a hand on the book and shouted, "Learn!"

Ting

New Skill: Imperial Formless Sword Technique

The sword technique book, now done with, glowed white and burned to ashes.

“Skill Check: Formless Sword Technique”

Skill: Imperial Formless Sword Technique:

This skill is tailored for Sculptors by Emperor Geihar Von Arpen.

As the level in Sculpture Mastery rises, the Attack Power of the skill increases by 1%.

It is composed of five movements, one breathing technique and one footstep technique.

“Fufufu” Weed chuckled.

The corners of Weed’s mouth rose.

‘This is great!’

The Arpenian Empire used to rule over the entire Continent. It then collapsed only to be remembered in name only, but the sword technique that had once been exclusive within the Imperial Family was undoubtedly worth money.

But Weed was once again cast into despair when he read the descriptions of each movement in the skill info window.

“What in the world!” He let cried out.

The first movement, which consumed the least amount of mana of the five, required three hundred mana points.

Because his maximum mana was far too low for now, the secret sword technique was far beyond his reach, even after he swallowed the medicine Tablet of the Emperor.

Chapter 09: The City Of Heaven

A pub. A place that is usually filled with hearty laughter and clamorous noises had been silent for the last few days all because of a single man, Volk.

He had a scarily massive body, but what was scarier was his face.

Considering that someone whose countenance could make even an Orc's heart skip a few beats, had been drinking gloomily all day long, it was hardly surprising that the pub was drowned in silence.

Volk made a terrifying face while drinking.

‘I want to propose to her. But I need something special for her, if there is anything.’

Volk wanted to propose to a lady. His heart-breaking anguish wasn't visible to others.

‘A gift for her. Right, I've heard of a sculptor in the Citadel of Serabourg. I will ask him to make something for me. If he makes something that pleases my heart, I will give him the most precious thing I have in return.’

With that kind of promise in mind, Volk left the pub stumbling.

*

“Whew, this place is still full of users here.”

Back in the capital of Rosenheim kingdom after seven weeks, Weed felt a headache coming on at the sight of an incalculable number of avatars.

It was a dizzy scene in which buyers and sellers were actively trading with one another, and new adventurers were looking for partners to join their adventure.

“Quickly, Arse! Let’s go to your home.”

Weed led the colt to the Royal Stable. It followed him obediently.

As luck would have it, the poor beast had just barely survived the poisonous gas from the Queen Worm.

As if it knew by instinct alone, that it had just missed imminent death more times than it deserved, the colt was willing to stay out of Weed’s way; the sooner it got home, the better.

There was a shabby stable outside the Royal Palace, and as soon as the chief horse trainer laid eyes on the colt, he grimaced.

“The good times are gone, now that this mouth-firing Arse is back. Heard of you from Lord Midvale. Are you returning this

beast that shames his father, Weed-nim?” Lighthearted now that he’d finally left the colt in an empty lot with the trainer.

“You’ve had a good journey? I know that this here beast spells nothing but trouble!” the trainer said gruffly.

“I am fine. It’s over now.” he replied to the trainer.

“Lord Midvale has left a message for you. He wants you to visit him if you are still interested in the centurion job. He says it’s yours anytime.”

“Tell him I appreciate it.”

The chief horse trainer was polite to Weed who was virtually a stranger to him.

Assured once again that a man’s status depended on who his contacts were, and what he had done in his name, Weed left the Royal Stable and went to the Training Hall.

There, he met the instructor.

“Hmm. So that’s what happened to you...”

The instructor was very sorry that Weed was forced to convert to the Legendary Moonlight Sculptor class.

“It is my fault.”

Weed kept it short. He just dropped his head with a grim face.

“No. How can anyone in his right mind blame this on you? The counselor stepped over the line. Still, hang on to hope Weed-nim.” The instructor said, patting Weed’s shoulder.

“Yes, Instructor. You’re the one I can always rely on...” Weed said.

“Haha. Absolutely. Anyway, you have come back from a great journey and you’ve finished my quest.”

The instructor rewarded him with three gold and fifty points of public service to Rosenheim for the completion of The Clean-up Operation in the Lair of Litvart quest.

As public service is accumulated over time, it gives a user the upper hand in trades in the country in question, and if enough is collected, he or she can become qualified for government positions as well.

Unfortunately however, the instructor’s attitude toward him had changed slightly. He no longer considered Weed his kind as a colleague on the same path in swordsmanship.

It implied that the friendship between them, which Weed had worked so hard to build up, was crumbling a little.

After visiting the instructor, Weed stopped by at Rodriguez's manor as his last visit. As always, the counselor was confined in his study.

"Haha. You really did finish the quest," Rodriguez said with a genuine sound of surprise in his voice. "I had been wondering how you had fared because you had not appeared on my doorstep for in a long time."

"Yes, Counselor."

"Hmm... Anyway, as destiny directs it, I have an object for you."

Rodriguez handed Weed a wooden statue that fitted in his palm. It was shaped like an imperial knight.

"What is this?" Weed asked.

"It is the legacy of Geihar von Arpen the Magnificent. My family used to serve the Imperial Family of the Arpenian Empire long ago. The blood, and the obligation accompanying it, has flowed in my family generations. I am the one to take the task for this generation. Now that I hand it to you, I am finally liberated from the reins of this duty," Rodriguez said.

"But what is this statue for?" Weed had already received a wooden statue of a different shape when he carried out Zahab's Moonlight Sculptor quest.

“I do not know the secret of this wooden statue, either,” Rodriguez said. “Myth has it that there have been five masters in sculptural art on the Continent. Of course, it is only an ancient myth, for they came and went like the wind. These Master craftsmen are known to leave their own crafts in their legacies, so I surmise that this statue is probably one of them. According to the myth, if you succeed in collecting all five of the statues, and solve the puzzle arising from them, the ultimate secret of sculptural art will appear.”

Still doubtful, Weed identified the wooden statue. Due to his low level in that skill, he succeeded in finding out the identity of the statute after only a couple of failed attempts.

Ting

Item: Wooden Statue

Durability: 1/1

This statute contains the Emperor Geihar Von Arpen’s skills.

Equips:

Enables you to acquire a unique skill to give the breath of life to

any statue.

Requirement:

Expert stage in Sculpture Mastery

When Weed identified the wooden statue left by Zahab, he also found an Sculpting Blade technique whose prerequisite was five or above skill level in sword mastery.

“A great secret is hidden in sculpture mastery,” Weed said.

“Since you’re now on the path in sculptural art, I wish you all the best in making it to ‘Grand Master’ in sculpture mastery. The world has never seen a Grand Master, but if there is ever one, he will be able to handle the fate of the Continent easily,” Rodriguez said. “It is true that I introduced you to this path out of malicious intent, but it is also a true tale that I have told you.”

Weed no longer resented Rodriguez. The past was the past, and a sudden interest in the craft had hit him.

‘The one who creates his own path.’ Weed thought.

Furthermore, Weed was told that if he ever made it to the top, the days of riches and power were waiting for him.

Rodriguez thought he had paid off the old score with Weed. At the sight of his sorry state after he wandered hungry and cold for seven weeks, the grudge was already gone in the counselor's mind.

"I have another question, Counselor. Do cooks or blacksmiths have their own hidden path to becoming Grand Master?" Weed asked.

"I guess so. God is generous," Rodriguez said. "Remember– not everyone on the path in the cooking skill sees and grabs an opportunity given."

"Then..."

"There must be other Chosen Ones! They will see to it their own way. It is up to them if they have it or not."

When Weed had heard all he wanted to hear, so he left the manor.

*

Darius could hear his heart pounding. He had never expected it to go this far when he had solved a series of trivial-looking quests.

The best luck, he had called it.

There were two men at the center of a power game in Rosenheim Kingdom— Duke Kanus and Count Albroom. Of the two, Duke Kanus, who is in charge of the military affairs, was more powerful.

The man in question was now lowering a snowy white sword toward him now.

“Darius-nim, I hereby bestow temporary knighthood of Rosenheim upon you in recognition of your dedicated services to the Royal Court. I order you to form a punitive force by the power of a knight and rescue the villagers at the frontier from their misery.”

“I am at your service, milord. You can count on me,” Darius said.

“Then, Sir Darius, I entrust this task to you,” Duke Kanus said.

Darius felt a slight touch of the blade on both shoulders in turn, then on one the head.

It might have been a dreadful sensation in times of war, but he was in the middle of an ordination ceremony of knighthood in the Royal Palace of Rosenheim. Moreover, the holder of the sword was Duke Kanus.

Rather than fearful, it was such a memorable moment for Darius that he almost let out a cry of excitement. Darius had to fight this spontaneous temptation to exclaim and roll over on the tapestry in spite of the solemn atmosphere. Suppressing a smirk, his face

wrinkled into a grin.

‘Now I’m the commander of a punitive force’ Darius thought, and counted himself very, very lucky.

*

‘I’ve got to do something...’ Weed thought as he made a serious face.

The nature of the sculptor class that he happened to stumble on was as follows:

As Weed’s main weapon was a sword, it was useful to compare him to a sword warrior.

The moment the class is decided, a sword warrior gains a 50% bonus on sword mastery. Of course, Weed could close the gap with his useful handicraft skill as compensation.

Thanks to the initially heightened stats, even a knight at the same level was no match for him. In the case of relatively lower levels, he was confident that he could win a duel against two sword warriors at the same level, supported by the Sculpting Blade technique and the Imperial Formless Sword Technique.

The Imperial Formless Sword Technique— Weed was surprised by its dominant power when he tried it.

This technique was something close to a cheat, not only doubling the speed, reflex and the power of destruction, but even tripling the recovery of mana. No wonder the Emperor Geihar selected it to leave to his successor.

However, the warriors and knights also have their own sword skills and breathing patterns. When they master a breathing pattern suitable to their own class, it has a great effect on them as well, even when the grade of sword techniques that they know is lower than Weed's Imperial Formless Sword Technique.

It is the special privilege enjoyed by the knights and warriors, the two standard fighting classes that specialized in combat skills.

In other words, no matter whether Weed raised his handicraft skill and other stats zealously, or acquired more cheat-like skills, he would one day be caught up by his counterparts. Even now, Weed was only slightly ahead of them unless he used underhanded tactics.

Obviously, he would have been much weaker than an ordinary sword warrior without timely investment in the handicraft skill as well as the Imperial Formless Sword Technique, and additional stats that he had earned from the Training Hall trial.

‘But the sculptor class has a greater potential than appears. If not, the Emperor Geihar could not have conquered the Continent, and it would be hard to explain Zahab's strength.’

*

The Citadel of Serabourg, the capital of Rosenheim Kingdom.

In front of the Central Fountain where the thriving downtown was located, a line of avatars was watching various statues on display. Weed had opened a second stall to work on his skill level in sculpture mastery.

“Hello. How much is this?” a girl asked.

“Five silvers,” Weed said.

“Oh my, it’s too expensive, can you please make a little discount for me? Please~? I’ll buy two pieces.”

The cute girl beamed at Weed, trying to persuade him, but he was merciless. Especially when it came to money, he treated men and women alike.

“With due respect, young lady, a discount is like an insult to my artworks. Do you think I discounted my passion in art, and my devotion to the work in particular, when I carved this statue? An artwork has to bear a fair price that reflects its true value, which will grow within your mind as time passes,” Weed said.

The girl was moved by his words. Now that she thought about it, It was silly that she had tried to bargain for artwork that held the sculptor’s heart. Seized with remorse, she took some shiny silver

coins out of her pocket.

“I’m so sorry. Here are ten silvers,” the girl said.

“Thank you, young lady.” Weed grinned demurely, handing over two statues. It was a winner’s smile, proud of himself that he had sold the statues as they were originally priced.

As a sculptor with the bold description ‘Legendary Moonlight,’ which he had resisted but converted to in the end, he carved beautiful statues even by the standard of Pratique Des Arts, Peinture, Sculpture, Gravure.

His current skill level in sculpture mastery was four. Since Weed converted to Moonlight Sculptor, the effects of his sculpture mastery had been doubled, not to mention that he owned one of the top items that practically amounted to a cheat, Zahab’s sculpting knife.

Weed’s lineup was yet limited to small-size statues made of plain materials by his immature expertise in sculpture mastery. Their simplicity and low price rather appealed to a broader spectrum of customers.

Some of his fans even lined up to pick up the artworks that he was working on there and then.

Foxes and rabbits, which cost less than ten coppers for their base materials, were the most popular items in his stall that sold at a

lightning speed, though they were priced at five silvers.

Weed believed that his enterprise was an honest business. He wasn't forcing anyone to buy his statues. What could he do about people flocking to get hold of them for the stated price?

Weed moved the sculpting knife faster. He was raising his expertise rating in sculpture mastery while he was making money.

Like sculpture mastery; cooking, repair and other craft skills are upgraded from the basic 'beginner' stage to 'intermediate' when they reach skill level ten, it then falls back to level one after the rank upgrade.

For the cooking skill, the intermediate upgrade creates solid options of enhancing life and mana benefits for hand-made meals. For the repair skill, the intermediate stage introduces a new tech tree for producing and refining weapons and gear.

That isn't the end of it.

When the skill level reaches ten once again, thus passing the intermediate stage onto the 'expert' and then ascends to become a full-fledged master of their trade. Master are those who has proven worthy of themselves by completing all the necessary steps.

A master in any field of skills, combat or craft, is recognized and respected based solely on the merits of his expertise in the skill, but overall craft skills, such as sculptural art and cooking skill, are

very limited in prospect.

Weed's priority at this point was upgrading his basic handicraft skill to the intermediate stage.

The skill level had increase to nine while he was dedicated to repairing damage equipment and serving meals to the troops in the Lair of Litvart. Only one more level was need and then the handicraft skill would reach the intermediate stage.

The Intermediate handicraft skill enhances sword mastery and archery by increasing the overall attack power by 30%.

This skill is mandatory for a sculptor whose attack power is substandard at best, which is penalized by the character of his class.

‘The handicraft skill is quite handy.’

As the handicraft skill rises, all the craft skills become more efficient. The expert handicraft skill can lift guild restrictions for a user into a wider field of craft skills, such as blacksmith work and alchemy.

The Legendary Moonlight Sculptor class already gave a free pass to all the craft skills related to other professions, but Weed was aware that a higher handicraft skill would make it easier and faster to acquire and develop them all.

Perhaps the crafters gradually intersect with one another to the point where they converge on the same path to supremacy of a Grand Master.

Actually, it is an understatement that the crafters would become extinct without the existence of the handicraft skill. They cannot catch up with combat specialists unless they beef up their pathetic combat abilities.

‘Now I’ve finished a hundred statues!’

Even though Weed was carving statues relentlessly, his skill level in sculpture mastery was stuck at level 4 at 98%. In contrary to the fast-growing handicraft skill, the growth of his sculpture mastery was slowing down.

‘I hope it’ll level up after fifty more statues.’

In that moment, female customers suddenly parted in alarm, and through a corridor between them appeared a tall man with terrorizing looks who was walking toward Weed.

The man seemed so full of a deadly aura that even Weed felt his spine freeze.

‘What have I done wrong to turn that thug against me?’ Weed asked himself under the breath.

The man looked around with slit eyes.

Scream

“He saw me~!” the girls shrieked.

The man walked toward Weed slowly, and then bowed down miserably like a bedraggled mouse.

“I’d like to ask you for a favor,” the man said.

“Shoot” –Wrong choice of a word.

“I’m here to buy a statue. But I couldn’t find anything I wanted.” The man said kneeling down before Weed. “Can you make a statue the way I order? No, I beg you, please. You should be able to make a statue for me, so I can propose to the lady.”

Weed tried to get the man to his feet and hear him out. The man’s name was Volk.

Volk had fallen in love with a woman. The primary motive for starting the online game was to protect her by her side. For the sake of this person, who was a priestess, he had selected the paladin knight class for his avatar.

During a year of numerous missions and battles, she had not died once owing to his devotion and sacrifice. He had also enjoyed his second life that was accompanied by blessing and healing from her.

The bond between them had deepened as months went by, and he was so happy every time he saw her.

Now was the time for him to propose a marriage to her.

“I want to give her something she’d never forget. Not a flower that withers someday. I want you to carve the flowers that shall never wither—to engrave my heart in them! Please!” Volk begged on his knees.

His face was intimidating, but his heart wasn’t.

How many men would kneel down before a total stranger for the sake of such an unconditional love cherished in the heart?

Sighing deeply, Weed looked around. Many women looked touched. Even he, blinded by money, could sense Volk’s grief.

*

‘I love her. I love her, but why doesn’t she see it in me?’

‘I want to speak with my heart.’

‘I tried to say in my heart a thousand times, I LOVE YOU!’

‘But why can’t I say the same words to her?’

*

As a man, Weed's sympathies were with Volk. Weed held the paladin's hand and helped him rise to his feet.

"For such a favor..." Weed said politely, "You don't need to kneel down, Volk-nim. In your own right, you can ask for it on your feet. I am weak to that kind of request. I'll gladly accept your commision."

Volk shed tears at these words.

"Thank you so much, Weed-nim!"

"Not at all. So, what kind of flowers do you want?"

"Please make seven sunflowers. It will embody my heart, which has followed her, the sunshine of my life, for seven years."

"I see. Can you wait a moment?"

Weed studied the wood stock beside him and chose the best quality timber— Elvenwood.

It was a very thick, hard wood that was known to grow only in a warmer climate in the south. It was still in one piece, the size of a small rock, which was yet to be chopped to smaller blocks

conforming to statues.

‘I must do my best to deliver it this time.’

Weed could carve a fox or rabbit with his eyes closed now, but flowers seemed like a challenge.

‘If I carve each flower separately, it will be a simple matter, but how can I put them together later? Seven sunflowers and a hundred roses as my private gift for this couple. I’d better carve a bouquet of all the flowers at once.’

Weed pictured the overall shape of the final work, and began to smooth the Elvenwood very slowly.

Volk and other girls had no idea what Weed was up to. They could not understand why he chose such a large piece of wood to carve only seven sunflowers. In any case, as the Elvenwood was being trimmed off, a shape was surfacing little by little.

The first flowers were relatively large sunflowers, soon followed by roses encircling them.

As Weed’s magic hands danced, a beautiful bouquet revealed itself from top to bottom.

“Wow!”

“It’s amazing...”

Customers in waiting soon turned into spectators in awe, watching the sculptural art unfolded by Weed.

Each time the sculpting knife snapped, each time the wood was trimmed, the audience throbbed with anxiety because a small mistake could snap the fragile trunk of a flower.

“Oh, my god! Let him finish it!”

This was the wish of not only Weed and Volk, but also everyone else present.

Right in front of them, Weed concentrated on the flowers fervently.

As the sculpting knife moved, the wood was being shaped, revealing the blossoms, trunks and leaves.

‘Failure isn’t allowed here’ Weed’s eyes gleamed with his determination.

He would have been forgiven for any failure if he had been alone, but now he was onstage surrounded by a thick circle of spectators. If he made a mistake before his prospective customers, his skyrocketing reputation would immediately crash and burn.

He knew better than anyone else that his popularity was growing, largely attributed to the fact that there was no other sculptor in the near vicinity, and he had to avoid it shrinking at any cost.

A fan’s fantasy is equal to money!

Weed sublimated his excessive obsession into artistic production, and finally succeeded in making the bouquet.

Ting

Level Up: Sculpture Mastery (Beginner Lv: 5 | 17%):

Enhances beauty and complexity of statues.

Decreases the rate at which you fail to produce statues.

Upgrade: Handicraft Skill (Beginner Lv: 10 to Intermediate Lv: 1 | 5%):

Increases attack power with weapons and fists. (+30% ATK)

Enhances every field of craft skill and Sword Mastery.

Art has risen by 5 points (+5 ART)

Fame has risen by 1 point (+1 FAME)

Warning:

The sale of a failed work may cancel it.

Once Weed finished the wooden bouquet, the two skills leveled together.

Because his sculpture mastery had been stuck at the expertise rating of 98% with the skill level of four, the first level up message wasn't surprising, but though the expertise rating for the handicraft skill had remained six percent left lower than the next level, it was filled at once, promoted to the intermediate stage.

As luck would have it, the Art stat, which had been bothering him constantly because its progress was nowhere to be seen, increased by five points.

“This is unbelievable.”

“Open Skill window”

Weed checked the window quickly, and realized at a glance that his skill level in sculpture mastery had not only hit, but had also accumulated an expertise rating of 17% above the line. Even the handicraft skill scored 5% after it converted to intermediate level one.

‘Aren’t I lucky?’ Weed was excited by his fortune, but soon understood why it had taken place. Sculptural art isn’t a conveyor belt.

The expertise rating in sculpture mastery does not advance by mass production of similar statutes as if they were made by a cookie cutter. No, only when a sculptor is dedicated to create an original work of high artistic value that has never been tried before, will sculpture mastery gain an enormous expertise rating. It reminded Weed of the first fox and rabbit statues that had improved his expertise rating in sculpture mastery greatly in the initial phase.

Tried and failed, his skill level had risen visibly fast. But when he no longer tried a new shape or style due to force of habit though, and repeatedly churned out monotonous products, his progress in sculpture mastery had slowed down almost to a stop.

‘I thought leveling was supposed to slow down as the level was higher, but that wasn’t it. I was taking the wrong path.’

While Weed was immersed in his own thoughts, Volk and other women were fascinated by the bouquet. A bouquet made of wood. The sunflowers and roses radiated softness and warmth, bearing life like real ones.

“It’s finished, Volk-nim.” Weed said as he handed the bouquet over to Volk.

The sunflowers and roses were beaming on the paladin. To his eyes, it was magic.

“Oh, dear God. I can’t— can’t believe...” More tears dropped from the eyes of Volk. “Is this really made of wood? Sculpture mastery does magic...”

“Yup, Volk-nim. You just saw me carve this, didn’t you?”

“It’s simply unbelievable,” Volk said amid tears.

The other spectators were also dazzled by Weed’s finished work. He could not have made the bouquet without Zahab’s sculpting knife, and especially at the critical moment, his sculpture mastery and handicraft skill had been combined to bring out more fantastic effects on the work.

“I did make this bouquet with my heart. Now you go for hers with your heart Volk-nim,” Weed said.

He encouraged Volk in a fine manner. He was inspired that he had learned a new secret of sculpture mastery while making the bouquet.

“Thank you, thank you so much!” Volk said, sincerely grateful to Weed, putting his hand in the pocket to take out the payment for the bouquet.

Uplifted, Weed said, “It’s three gold.”

Considering the amount of effort that he had put into it, the statue deserved to be worth more than three gold, but he was content with it. Suddenly, Volk had a confused look, and began to turn over his pockets.

“Where... where are they gone?” Volk cried. His hand that had been combing through in his pocket didn’t hold anything in it.

It was Weed, though, who was panicked at that very moment.

‘Is he trying to pull this trick on me?!’

Weed already knew what was coming— more specifically, what Volk would say in the next second or so...

‘He will claim he’s lost money somewhere else.’

“I-I am so sorry, Weed-nim. I lost the money somewhere else!” Volk said.

‘Cause you can’t say you didn’t have any gold in the first place.’

Volk didn't wait for Weed to answer, and cried, "I think my pocket was picked. Damn squirrel!"

'And there you go. But you can't bluff your way out with this number of people witnessing your every move. If he's an expert in this line of business, he should know better than thinking he can rip me off and walk out alive.'

"Do you mind if I give you something of an equal value to make up for money?"

Volk followed the steps that Weed had already seen through, a typical trick for the penniless to try, but he underestimated Weed, whom spread a terrible aura.

'Who do you think you are to rip me off, jackass?' Weed thought.

Then, Volk was forced to put his hand again in his pocket.

"What a relief. I found two gold and ninety silvers left. Can you please discount ten silvers?" Volk asked.

"Why don't you just give me something worth ten silvers? What do you have?"

Weed's sharp eyes ran over Volk's outfit. He observed the weapons, his gear and ornaments.

Tens of thousands of identified items in Royal Road were registered in alphabetic order in a corner of his brain. He wanted to immediately identify a new item upon acquiring it, estimate the market price for it, and rejoice twice, even thrice, right on the spot.

But his eyes failed to catch anything valuable from Volk who was poorly attired. The paladin took out a book from his clothes and handed it to Weed.

“How about allowing for ten silvers with this book?”

Weed quickly scanned the book.

Ting

Item: The Forgotten City on the Versailles Continent #4:

In the sky above the Southern Province of Rosenheim Kingdom is a metropolis made mysterious by fairy tales and legend, which is recorded to be populated by a race that is distinctly non-human. To describe them at best, the right word would be the Aves.

Strong warriors themselves, the race detested monsters, driving the lowly irritants out of the Southern Province, so they were nowhere to be seen. However, the race has now vanished, and even the path to the City of Heaven, as it is known, is now lost.

Now even the presence of the City of Heaven comes to be questionable, but the townspeople in the Southern Province still believe in the city and her courageous avian residents as the elders instill this tale in the minds of the next generation.

According to an unreliable source, it needs a Mysterious Seed to climb up to the City of Heaven.

Weed felt deceived. Who would believe such nonsense as the City of Heaven?

Granted that a city was actually floating somewhere in the air, violating every law of physics, the city would be seen from the earth. Consequently, that book claiming the presence of the City of Heaven would be hearsay.

If that wasn't ridiculous enough, the last passage about climbing up a plant to the city was outrageous, if not lousy. The thing had about zero credibility.

As if he sensed that Weed was skeptical of the content of the book he had given him, Volk defended himself in a hurry,

“You may not believe this, but it's a hard-won book...”

“ ... ”

“I wish I could give you something better, but coincidentally, this book is the most valuable item in my possession,”

Volk said, showing what he had in his backpack— a rabbit’s fur, a snake’s scale and a small piece of a broken sword.

Weed could repair the sword, but it was a sloppy thing with +2 ATK that even a kobold would throw away. Perhaps he could negotiate for it for two coppers in the blacksmith’s workshop.

“I am so sorry, Weed-nim.”

Weed sighed deeply.

‘Okay, it’s fine. I learned the secret of sculpture mastery, anyway. I couldn’t have figured it out if I had printed out the same junk forever. I will forgive him for cheating ten silvers. No big deal.’

When Weed mentioned cost three gold, he had already considered it negotiable. His call was mainly intended to shock Volk into playing by his book.

The prices of most statues, which were not fixed by any normal standard, were largely determined by the way a customer made a bargain with a sculptor.

Two gold and ninety silvers, plus a silly book, wasn't a bad deal at all, the level up of his sculpture mastery and other skills included. But God only knew what Weed would have committed to in the case of two gold and eighty silvers.

"I think this book is worth the ten silvers. I wish you good luck with your proposal to her, Volk-nim. And for the lady you've fallen in love with..."

"Excuse me?" Volk said.

"She will live a wonderful life with you,"

Weed said sarcastically. With such a penny-pinching husband, she would never be broke for the rest of her life, for one thing.

"Thank you, Weed-nim." After shaking hands with Weed, Volk walked away slowly. Weed watched him leave.

Suddenly, on Volk's outfit, appeared shiny Mithril armor. His trousers were covered by a pair of Mithril gaiters. Even his boots turned into Mithril—that was a twist that left Weed reeling.

'He's wearing a life cotton ring, a rare item that doubles maximum life! A priceless treasure! As far as I know, those earrings resist the element of lightning. I heard it's only listed in the catalogue, and no one actually had them. You! You bastard, you're loaded! It's not fair that you just ripped off a poor sculptor!'

The items Volk was equipped with were valuable beyond Weed's wildest imagination. Some of them were even worth thousands of gold.

*

Finished with the bouquet after hours of hard work, Weed stretched out his arms and yawned.

Suddenly, the spectators began to shove yellow gold at Weed and shouted—

“Make me exactly the same bouquet, please!”

“I just bought two foxes, but can I return them and change my order to the bouquet?”

“Please!”

*

Upon leaving the Citadel of Serabourg, Volk made a cheesy smile.

Full of humorous heart that betrayed his scary countenance, Volk had sincerely desired to reward Weed, who had created the bouquet with all his heart.

The book of the City of Heaven! Truthfully, Volk had spent two months to get hold of it. According to the book, it is a mysterious place that even he had not put his foot on.

One of the reasons he had come to Rosenheim was to visit the city. But the proposal to the lady who had stolen his heart outweighed anything else.

Volk had given Weed the book in return of the bouquet, but it felt like nothing.

‘Don’t just throw it away. Keep it. It will show you the way if you look for it, and you’ll get there someday.’

Holding the bouquet dearly, Volk headed for Brent Kingdom, where the dear lady was.

*

A wooden bouquet!

It was a perfect gift at times such as when a boy asks a girl out, so as the rumor about Volk the paladin, his fair lady and the wooden bouquet spread, Weed’s outdoor sculpture shop was quickly becoming a landmark.

Most users had seen statues as a keepsake lying on the fireplace

or stuck in the dark corner, only to be dusted from time to time, but Volk's event transformed the way they viewed statues.

That day, Weed declared, "I apologize, but I shall no longer be making the same shape of statues anymore!"

He came to this conclusion, born of his personal gains, to speed up leveling in his sculpture mastery and Handicraft skill. Yet the public was misled by his words.

"He's a real artist!"

"He is so cool~! He said he's not making the same statue twice."

"In that case, the value of his statues will rise."

The customers to Weed's vendor used to buy one or two rabbit-or fox-shaped statues as a souvenir at a cheap price, but now they ordered original designs for the gifts.

The number of finished products fell below two digits because a single work cost him a couple of hours, but they were more popular than the little cookie cutters he used to do— three gold per each statue.

Given that the business didn't require much of production costs, it was lucrative business.

In addition, Weed's skill level in sculpture mastery and Handicraft skill soared quickly in a short period of time.

In only three days, his skill level in sculpture mastery hit eight, way up from five and his intermediate Handicraft skill rose to level four.

When Weed was short of new orders, he cooked and sold food.

“Rabbit meat or fox meat! If you bring me any meat, I will cook it for you. It can't be preserved for a long time, so you should eat it within a day!”

Weed's cooking skill granted a bonus to life and vitality to the meals that he cooked. It was pretty much a poor man's steroid. Those who found it hard to deal with meat that they had picked up while they were hunting wild animals near the Citadel rushed to Weed.

“Here.”

“Do you really cook?”

“Yes. Trust me. All you have to pay for are the seasonings and sauces. The thing is, just bring me any kind of meat anytime you want,” Weed said.

Food made with sculptural art— meals served by Weed were artistic works. More users than you would think learn how to cook

because it is useful when they camp out in the field. But how many amateur cooks can apply the art stat when they are cooking?

Except for professional cooks, not so many users invest time and energy in the cooking skill, and appetizing meals are even rarer among the pros.

Selling quality food at a low price, Weed’s stall was a megahit. Users packed it in the hope of gaining a cheap bonus buff to their life and vitality.

Someone whispered to Weed, who had spent a week carving statues and cooking food for sale:

–Whisper–

– Weed-nim, can you hear me?

It was Pale the archer, who had become acquainted with Weed during late nights hunting foxes and wolves.

–Whisper–

– Hi. Long time no see.

– Great, you’re on! Where have you been? I sent you a whisper almost every day, but it was always blocked.

–Whisper–

– I had work to do.

The secret cave in the Lair of Litvart— while inside it, whispering was automatically blocked. Fortunately, Pale didn’t bother to pry into what Weed had been doing.

–Whisper–

– I see. Do you have time now?

Weed looked around. His statues were still very popular, but it was strictly production-on-demand now, so the sales had slowly passed their peak. What people wanted for a gift was similar. In that sense, his declaration to make only original statues boomeranged on him.

–Whisper–

– Yup.

– Then, why don't you join the punitive force quest to Village Baran with us? We decided to take the quest together, and I thought to contact you to ask if you wanted to join too.

Chapter 10: Weed's Role In The Punitive Force

The punitive force bound for Village Baran!

Located on the borderline of human civilization, Rosenheim Kingdom was surrounded by monsters.

The kingdom fortified the walls and organized militias in frontier towns, but the annual feasts by goblins and Orcs that raided to pillage autumn harvests were still rampant, which gave the royal court a headache.

The mission of the punitive force assigned to Darius was a group quest to take over Village Baran that had fallen into the hands of the lizardmen. Those who joined the punitive force shared the same quest, and they, composed of three hundred users, would come to drive the lizardmen out of the village.

This topic had been rattling around the Citadel of Serabourg for the last few days. Even users from other kingdoms were pouring into the Citadel to join the quest, making it even more crowded.

A member who took part in the quest was given EXPs, not to mention fame, in recognition of his service to Rosenheim Kingdom. Everyone was talking about it, yet it had escaped Weed as he was busy carving statues at his street stall.

Weed agreed to meet his former teammates first. They were waiting downtown.

“Nice to see you again, Weed-nim.”

“Wow, long time no see!”

Surka and Irene welcomed Weed warmly. Their outfits had changed greatly during his absence.

Surka wore a fine tunic, and Irene a snow-white clerical vestment. For Romuna the mage, it was a standard black robe.

They were surprised that Weed had still not changed his outfit.

“Weed-nim, where have you been?”

“It’s a long story...”

Before Weed could answer fully, Surka cut in and said,

“I understand. You haven’t signed in for weeks, right?”

“...”

“Oh, are you going to join the punitive force quest? Please come with us, Weed-nim!”

Romuna slipped her arm into Weed's as if they were a couple.

Pale the ranger was watching them with a wounded look that sent a chill down Weed's spine. He already sensed that Pale was secretly courting Romuna.

Slipping his hostage arm away from Romuna's firm grip, Weed asked,

"What's your level now?"

"I'm level forty-eight. I died five or six times in battles, so I'm the lowest among us,"

Surka said sheepishly.

"I'm fifty-one," Irene said.

"Same here," Romuna said.

"I'm level fifty-three," Pale said still disturbed by the scene.

Weed had learned that his teammates were all friends in reality, so they had always hunted monsters together, thus leveling up at an identical pace. Still, it was evident that they had been on serious hunting sprees because they had leveled up faster than other typical users.

They confided to Weed that they had withdrawn from college temporarily. Though they didn't tell him more, he guessed that they had since then have played Royal Road almost non-stop, without sleep, caged in their dark rooms like isolated, socially reclusive individuals.

Pale soon established that Weed would come along with them to join the punitive force quest.

“They posted that the level requirement was thirty and above. This quest gives a premium on earned experience. You can also win some fame.”

The punitive force was scheduled to encounter numerous types of monsters. The main target was the lizardmen that occupied Baran Village, but chances were that they would face relatively less dangerous goblins.

“The mission is a little risky, but we can call for help from NPCs if there's an emergency. I'm now sick and tired of spiders and bandits,” Pale made an appalled face.

While Weed was away, his teammates had hunted monsters in a nearby dungeon. It was the spider dungeon, where red spiders and poisonous arachnids were lurking behind every stalactite. Poison was taken care of by Irene, but Pale had been traumatized by being fastened to a sticky spider net, struggling pathetically against saliva-dripping giant spiders.

Weed nodded, understanding exactly what Pale had been through. He had had a tough time of his own crushing gigantic worms. “It wouldn’t be so bad to take part in the punitive force.”

“We welcome you, Weed-nim. By the way...”

“Yes?”

“Did you find the class?”

As far as the class was concerned, Weed had been undecided when he had been teamed with them in hunting sprees. They even had a private gamble on when he would get one.

“I got a class, but—”

“What class is it? Tell us.”

Irene, usually reserved, approached Weed with twinkling eyes. As a priestess in charge of healing and buffs that supported the other teammates, she was supposed to know every teammate’s class.

There are so many divisions for the warrior class alone, not to mention other branches of the combative classes that specialize in different weapons and styles of combat. Tanker types are heavy on defense and vitality, and deals damage types on attack power and strength.

In the case of Surka and Pale, they belonged to supportive classes with higher agility, but less strength and vitality compared to other melee fighters.

Furthermore, Paladins, nicknamed holy knights, can use divine power, including Healing Hand, for self-healing, thanks to their exclusive stat of faith.

Weed scratched his head. “I’m a sculptor.”

“Wow, thats cool! You chose an artist class.” Surka laughed brightly, but the rest looked less than delighted. The prejudice that associated a sculptor with weakness was deeply engraved in their subconscious.

In fact, the sculptor class is one of the craft classes that had nothing to do with combat skills, so it is deprived of any effects on strength and vitality.

Still, they embraced Weed as one of their own from the bottom of their hearts. They were not heartless enough to turn their backs on their former brother-in-arms just because he had converted to one of the least desirable classes.

“We were on our way to Sir Darius to join the punitive force. Come with us,” Pale said.

“But, you see, I’m a sculptor,” Weed said.

“Don’t worry. We can make up for what you’re missing. We should hurry before someone else fills the empty slot. The size of the punitive force is limited to three hundred users and two hundred NPC soldier participants in the order of arrival,” Pale said.

“Let’s go, Weed-nim,” Romuna said.

“If you think you aren’t qualified for a spot ‘cause you’re a sculptor, we will help you out. Please?” Surka said.

Now that Weed had disclosed his class, he was left without an excuse to say no.

The women felt so maternal toward Weed that they could not abandon him, even though they thought he was weak, and Pale almost begged him to join the punitive force quest to repay what he had done for them before.

Persuaded by their persistence, Weed headed for where Darius’s troops were stationed.

*

Duke Kanus held a regular meeting for the knights. All the knights who were within the Citadel, without exception, had been called to attend it. In the meeting, they discussed how to drive monsters out of Rosenheim, a conscription plan and other urgent

military issues.

“You have done an excellent job, Lord Midvale, and the soldiers whom you were assigned are trained competently. I’m impressed that their levels all exceed fifty,” Duke Kanus said.

“That was not my doing, your Excellency,” Sir Midvale said.

“Huh? I personally entrusted this task to you. Tell me what happened,” Duke Kanus said.

“If you insist, Your Excellency,” Sir Midvale said. Lord Midvale then reported in detail the events that had taken place in the Lair of Litvart.

“Hmm... I see.” Duke Kanus said as he rubbed his well-groomed mustache.

Other knights also looked taken aback that a foreigner, other than a Versailles native, had done the job so well. The NPCs recognize themselves as locals born on the Versailles Continent, and that users are freedmen sent by Gaea the Holy Seer. They had emotions, spoke and acted like real people, thanks to their programmed artificial intelligence.

“A fine man, indeed. Lord Midvale, why didn’t you recruit him to the Rosenheim Army?” Duke Kanus asked.

“I asked him to be a military officer twice, but he said he wanted

to retain his liberty and slay monsters at his own will,” Sir Midvale said.

“A freedman, he is,” Duke Kanus said, impressed.

“Yes, Your Excellency. Though he does not belong to our Kingdom, it seems to me that he is a man who shall devote time again to Rosenheim,” Sir Midvale said.

“If you say so, we’ll see his sword by our side again someday,” Duke Kanus said and dropped the subject about the Lair of Litvart and moved on to the next one.

*

On the way to Darius, Weed stopped by a grocery store.

“Weed-nim, why do we stop here?”

“You’ll see.”

The grocery store was crowded with lots of customers. They were mostly delivery boys from restaurants in the Citadel.

A boy, clad in what resembled a messenger’s attire, yelled,

“I want fresh breasts!”

“Puhaha, you are at the wrong place, young tiger. A brothel is at the next corner down the street and I hope you’ve got a photo ID,” the shopkeeper said.

“Shoot. I want chicken breasts!”

The boy grimaced. But the shopkeeper, oily as a snake’s tongue, was only smiling.

“Only chicken breasts? Don’t you need eggs, too?”

“Oops, I forgot... I need eggs, too.”

“Stay put. I’ll give you eggs when hens lay them.”

“How about chickens?”

“When the eggs hatch, sir.”

Irene giggled at the exchange between the shopkeeper and the delivery boy.

“Funny kid.”

“I guess he got a job in a restaurant because he can’t leave the Citadel for the first four weeks.”

“Bad choice. Why did he decide to work at a restaurant where there’s nothing much to learn?”

In Pale’s eyes, it wasn’t wise to make a career in a restaurant.

Newbies are advised to take quests that pay well or, in the case of spell-casting wannabes, to read and learn many things in a library. This is so they can buy more advanced weapons and gear, hunt monsters more easily and level up faster in the long run.

Weed disagreed with Pale’s opinion, though. “If you work in a restaurant, you can learn the cooking skill. It pays off,” Weed said.

“I know, but what’s the point of learning a useless skill like cooking? If you buy rye bread that is processed by the food preservation spell, it will last for a month,” Pale said.

“He’s right. Why do we need to learn how to cook when we can raise the satisfaction factor easily?” Surka asked.

To Weed, Pale and Surka sounded stupid to the point of childishness. They underestimated the cooking skill just as much as they had looked down upon sculpture mastery, not knowing that what impact great meals could have on the stats.

‘These people don’t know what a poor life is like,’ he mumbled to himself.

Weed's eyes darkened. Those who actually have been through times of financial hardship don't underestimate the significance of the cooking skill. Imagine you are forced to eat only rye bread when you hunt monsters in the field.

If you are a low-level newbie, running out of money, you will stand it because you have no alternative. But once your level reaches a point where you can afford to buy more delicious food, your tongue will automatically reject the rye bread.

In truth, even Pale didn't always put rye bread where his mouth was. When it comes to the bottom line, people are the same. They have the same list of desires, and when they fulfill it, it grows longer by itself. In particular, the basic needs of housing, clothing and food are inseparable from life.

Moreover, the cooking skill works in real life. As the cooking skill matures, it gives you a list of available recipes based on the types of ingredients that you have now. You can try a new recipe in the virtual game, and it will stick in your head after you log out. If you master the cooking skill at least to the expert stage, you will never need to worry about getting a job because any restaurant will hire you with arms wide open.

In other words, It means that reality is so exactly realized as it is in an virtual world. Royal Road is such a detailed and realistic virtual reality game to such an extent that what is learned in the virtual game can also be applied in reality.

Of course, the majority of users who don't bother learning craft skills as widely as Weed will never comprehend what it is really

about until they experience it with their own hands.

‘I wonder if they will ever want to try it, anyway,’ Weed anticipated that the value of the cooking skill would get higher as users leveled up in their hundreds.

For meals that Weed prepared with the basic cooking skill, they had a temporary bonus effect on life, so what would it be like when a master presented his cuisine?

‘I’m sure even a happily married couple would kill each other to taste a crumb of it.’

Not only the taste of food, but also the supplementary bonus would be spectacular.

Hard, flavorless rye bread worth three copper vs. French cuisine that tastes like heaven and increases various stats! The contest is over before it begins.

Weed imagined that meals prepared by a top chef would claim a stack of gold for a taste of their food.

He thought that the value of statues would remain superficial, but that the cooking skill, as long as it was an integral part of life, would never diminish in its influence on daily life.

The rankers would long for the best food that they could find, and the value of a professional cook would hit the ceiling.

‘Well, some people might have foreseen this before. Cooks are amongst the most zealous professionals in guarding their secrets. They must be formulating their own recipes and improving their cooking skill.’

Weed turned to his teammates with a serious face and said, “I can’t deny you the choice of looking down on the craft skills as a whole as the combat skills are important. But I think that the craft skills could end up being the most necessary skills in the future. All the craft skills have something in common, and they help an avatar’s combat ability as well. I suggest you learn the cooking skill. It’s essential to your daily life.”

“...”

“I’m sorry,” Surka said in a small voice.

“I forgot you were a sculptor, and I was thoughtless to speak ill of the crafters. I am really sorry,” Pale said.

Surka, Pale and Irene were red with embarrassment.

They thought that Weed was angry because they had belittled the cooking skill, one of the craft skills, right to his face.

“That wasn’t what I meant. You got me wrong.” Weed said as he shook his head.

No matter how hard he showed it to them, they would not see it until they felt the need to see it.

The grocery store had an amiable atmosphere as it largely entertained regular customers.

Weed thrust through them and walked to the register.

“Hello,” Weed said.

“Hello. I just heard you. You have the right idea about the cooking skill!” the shopkeeper said.

“Thank you.”

“Your face looks familiar to me...”

“Yup. I came here for grocery shopping a few days ago.”

When Weed improved his sculpture mastery and cooking skill at the same time, he had visited only this store to buy foodstuff in bulk—for a simple reason: the low price.

The easiest way to maximize profits is always to minimize costs by buying a large amount of materials at a time at a discount. Weed had always used the store for his purchases, yet it was the first time that he had ever spoken to the shopkeeper.

“Alright. Thank you for visiting my store. By the way, are you taking the path of a cook now?”

“No. My primary class is not a cook, but I know the value of the cooking skill.”

“Nice. So what can I do for you?” The shopkeeper’s eyes shone brightly, sizing up Weed.

He had already gathered from the conversation with the delivery boy that the shopkeeper was a user.

“Spices and sauces,” Weed said.

“Hmm, we have many different kinds of spices,” the shopkeeper said.

“There are salt, sugar and pepper, and I can show you extraordinary local specialties, such as spices from the land of the Elves, and bottles of sap squeezed out of some plants in the north.”

On the vast continent, plenty of items with distinctive tastes are harvested by local farmers and traded through caravans.

“I don’t need extraordinary spices. Only basic ones.”

“Great. Only fools who want to impress others look for something special. How about the quality?”

“Of course, I want the best.”

“How much?”

Weed counted how much money he had in his pockets. He had not sold his various types of ore yet, except for the silver that he had collected from the Queen Worms.

He was saving them those for future use, when he improved his repair skill enough to enable him to reduce the ores.

“I have twenty-seven gold now. I want to buy as much,” Weed said.

“Okay. I’ll give you some extra,” the shopkeeper said.

When Weed’s teammates overheard the conversation between him and the shopkeeper, they sensed a mutual understanding and respect flowing in between as if old drinking buddies had been reunited.

In fact, the shopkeeper was a user who had already taken the path of the cooking skill. When he saw Weed, he realized that a strong rival in the latest wave had showed up.

Weed also recognized the shopkeeper as a forerunner in the field of cooking, so they hardly needed a word. Eye contact alone told

them enough.

He packed the spices and sauces he had bought from the grocery store into his backpacks.

Once he was satisfied that he was fully prepared for a new journey, he headed for the camp of Darius' punitive force with his teammates.

*

The punitive force bound to Baran Village was already the talk of the town, so there were many users who were eager to join the quest.

Darius sat down on a tiny chair, as he interviewed applicants for the quest, "Next, please."

"Hello, I am Cochran. Level 68 archer. I'm good at Multiple Shot, and my weapon is Lasante's Bow."

"Passed."

The next in line was Weed's party with Pale in the foreground, who walked to Darius anxiously.

Pale spoke as the representative of his party. "We are all in the same party. Level fifties. A priestess, a battle mage in the fire

element, a ranger, a monk, and...”

Pale stammered before he introduced Weed because he was afraid that when it was mentioned that Weed was a sculptor, Darius would be upset and reject them altogether.

“Hmm, you have a balanced party. Great. And he is...” Darius spotted Weed and asked Pale, “Is he part of your party, too?”

“Yes.”

“Five total. It fits exactly the empty slots left in my army.”

“Then...”

“Will you join the quest to take back Baran Village?”

Darius asked, and a message window emerged in front of Weed’s eyes.

Ting

Quest: Punitive Force to Baran Village:

Beyond the border of Rosenheim Kingdom was a wilderness of

monsters. Walls were built, and troops were dispatched in order to keep out the monsters that annually invaded the motherland, but there was an opening. Through the opening, a wave of monsters surged in and occupied Baran Village

With Rosenheim soldiers, save Baran Village from calamity, and destroy the monsters.

Difficulty:D

Quest requirement:

Must be completed within 30 days

Pale said with a big grin,

“Sure.”

“I want to join it, too.”

“Same here.”

“Thank you for your invitation to the quest.”

“Yup.”

Weed was the last one to accept the quest.

You have accepted the quest.

“Okay. Let’s move now.”

Darius sprang to his feet and cried, “Everyone in the punitive force quest, please come over here! We have enough people, so we’re leaving now!”

*

There was no ceremony for punitive force bound for Baran Village. Only a handful of people who were friends of some troops waved goodbye.

Three hundred users, colorfully attired, marched out of the South Gate and toward the Southern Province— the destination was Baran Village. They intended to take back the village that had been lost to the lizardmen.

“Hehe. I haven’t been this far away from the Citadel before. It’s like we’re on a field trip!” Romuna said.

“I think I should have brought lunchboxes,” Irene said.

The two girls were chitchatting pleasantly.

Fresh air and a sunny day! It was a perfect day for a field trip. Lions and wolves, terrified by the size of the troops, were cleared of the path, ensuring the safety of the trip.

While Weed's teammates were walking lightly, enjoying idle talk, Weed was checking out the other troops, the way they dressed and what they were equipped with.

'The average level of users in the force is between forty and sixty. I heard that Darius' level was a hundred and forty-something.'

Darius had five teammates; three sword warriors, a thief, and a plain warrior.

'I'd better assume that they have almost the same levels.'

Weed concluded that Darius had packed his battalion with anyone who ran up to accept the quest, just to meet the requirement of three hundred users involved.

This suspicion had arisen in Weed when Pale applied for this quest, and Darius was very lax in accepting his party. In the case of Weed, Darius had not even bothered asking his class and level.

'I guess he wants to get this punitive force quest done as soon as possible. A lot of rewards are at stake.'

A sense of alarm was creeping into Weed's mind. He had done his own research on Darius, the leader of this punitive force, right after Pale whispered to him to bring up this quest.

Darius had a bad reputation. It was an established fact that he would do anything if it advanced his own interest.

"Everyone, listen," Weed said in a low voice.

"Huh?" Surka said.

"When we arrive at Baran Village, we should not trust anyone easily," Weed said.

"What do you mean by that?" Romuna asked.

"I'm saying we're on our own now," Weed said.

Pale looked around as though awakened by Weed's words. Then, he agreed with Weed, "I see your point, Weed-nim."

"What is it? I don't get it," Surka said.

Weed frowned at her.

"Do we know any other member in the punitive force?"

“No,” Surka said.

“Are you trying to say if a good item is dropped, someone else might kill us to take it?” Irene asked.

The question she raised quickly froze everyone in her party. Surka and Romuna even looked scared.

“That’s not what I implied. Of course, it could happen. But I don’t think there will be anyone who is bold enough to overstretch his limit in front of many witnesses in the punitive force. If he earns the murderer’s sign by killing us, he’ll become a public enemy number one right in the middle of thousand odd people, and they will kill him in revenge. Also, Darius will not let it happen, because it could endanger his authority.”

“What is disturbing you, then?” Romuna asked.

“We have no one else to count on. That’s our problem,” Weed said.

Weed led his teammates a little away from the marching troops to avoid eavesdropping, and added, “Despite our low levels, we will fight a great number of monsters.

“Exactly! Isn’t it why they assembled three hundred users for the quest, and borrowed another two hundred soldiers from Rosenheim Army? When we finish it, we will gain a lot of experience and fame,” Surka said.

“Here comes a question. How will you fight when a battle starts?” Weed asked. “Yes, we have a lot of people, but we are just a bunch of strangers who don’t know anything about one another. We don’t know what skills a ranger over there has. We don’t know if a mage-like man next to him is really a mage or just an imposter in disguise. Imagine if the lizardmen take us by surprise, how will you react to them? How can we stay together and fight back?”

“But what’s wrong with that? The raids are supposed to be like this, aren’t they?” Irene asked.

When Irene raised another question, Pale shook his head. “Most raid quests are about killing a certain number of monsters or clearing some area on a limited scale. I haven’t heard much about large-size battles against an army of monsters on an open field like this quest. We have three hundred users and two hundred soldiers here, but when a battle begins, we will get stuck to our own teammates and break up into segments,” Pale said.

“That means...”

“Irene-nim, numbers always lie. Three hundred users and two hundred soldiers don’t guarantee that the party will be as strong as the sum of their strength. If we overwhelm the monsters, it will be fine. But if we encounter an unexpected turn of events, we will crumble like a house of cards. We should be careful,” Weed said.

Darius had been too impatient and too obsessed with creating a swift victory.

Since there were plenty of users who were eager to join the quest, he could have accepted high-level users to lower the risk of going astray in an emergency— though Weed's party probably wouldn't have been able to join if that had been the case.

However, Darius was determined to have all public service points, so he had rejected any user at level hundred or above. Instead, he had loaded the slots with low-level users.

He had also ordered the Rosenheim soldiers to stay behind and follow the main body at a little distance.

'I bet he was worried that the soldiers might pick up some EXPs and fame that would belong to them.'

If Weed had been the leader of the troops for the quest, he would have done exactly the opposite. He would have left out three hundred users, and instead, made good use of the Rosenheim soldiers.

If he had commanded the NPCs to destroy the band of lizardmen, his public reputation and charisma would have gone up.

You can gain fame or EXPs in a number of different ways, but the charisma stat needs this sort of opportunity to rise quickly.

Weed once again reminded his teammates to watch out.

*

The troops stopped from time to time to take a rest and a meal. The users in the punitive force chewed on dried food they had brought, or set light meals. The Rosenheim soldiers kept to a timetable of three meals every day.

“How will we prepare meals?” Surka asked.

Pale and Surka shot a casual glance at Weed as they were talking about the upcoming meal time. They knew, from the conversation that had taken place in the grocery store the other day that Weed was good at cooking.

Weed stepped up to display his cooking skill. “I will serve you meals. Pale-nim, can you go hunt rabbit or deer? At least two of each,” Weed said.

“Okay,” Pale said.

Pale took his bow, and before long, came back with three rabbits and two deer. As a ranger specializing in the bow, he could now fire an arrow at a rabbit without missing.

“Now I will prepare a delicious meal for you,” Weed said.

Weed set a bonfire, peeled the skins of the rabbits and deer, stuck skewers through them, and placed them right above the fire. Rotating them little by little, he salted and peppered them all over.

“Heeyah, it looks great,” Surka said.

“Can we eat now?” Irene asked.

Surka and Irene were slavering over the smell of the roasted meats—the temptation to gnaw on them was almost irresistible.

Weed had already captivated the tongues and stomachs of Sir Midvale and his troops in the Lair of Litvart. They had eaten his beef stew like a pack of hungry wolves, and even scratched what little was left on the bottom of the pots.

Compared to those days, his intermediate handicraft skill now deepened the taste of his food, and the art stat was applied to make the rabbit meat look more appetizing.

Even the skewers poking through the deer’s mouth to its backside to keep it above the fire looked gorgeous.

“Please, help yourself” Weed said when he was certain that he’d taken enough time to torture his teammates with the sight of the food.

As the saying goes, hunger is the best kind of seasoning.

Munch

As soon as Weed gave his teammates the go-ahead, they rushed to the barbecues and began tearing flesh from bones and tossing it into their mouths.

“Oh my gawd! It’s soooo good!” Surka cried around a mouthful of food.

“You’re the best, Weed-nim,” Romuna said, giving a thumbs-up with a greased hand. Her mouth was coated with yellow grease.

Apparently succumbing to gluttony, one of the seven sins, Irene the priestess was eating a whole rabbit, while Pale was busy lightly gnawing on a deer’s rear leg. They were even licking the bones.

“Thank you, Weed-nim.”

Gratified by the splendid food, they complimented Weed again and again.

“Not at all.”

Weed looked around, and found many other users had surrounded the little grill party without him noticing.

“That looks so good...” one of them said with a bit of drool coming from the side of his mouth.

“Really...”

“I’m envious that she’s enjoying the meat so much!”

Among the members in the punitive force, the bystanders’ appetite was stimulated even more by the sight of Irene and Romuna, who were having the time of their lives.

“Do you mind if I have some of your meat?” a man asked.

Weed freely distributed his food to others. “Help yourself. But you should bring some meat next time.”

“Oh, thank you so much.” They received Weed’s food gratefully. But it ran out before more than a few had tasted it.

Weed began to work harder at the next mealtime because many users rushed to him with meat and asked him to cook it for them. In fact, some of them knew how to cook. They had been forced to prepare meals when they ran out of the dried food they had during a hunting mission. To put it bluntly, however, eighty percent of the troops were male, who hated mundane kitchen chores, such as peeling potatoes and dicing onions. The same goes for the female users.

Even those who learned the cooking skill preferred gathering meat and giving it to Weed to cooking it themselves.

“I feel sorry for you. I really owe ya!” a man said on the second day of the journey.

“Not at all. You don’t need to say that. I am doing this for fun,” Weed said.

“But...”

“Are you really uncomfortable with it? Then, how about this? Let’s make a deal. If you want to pay back what you feel indebted to me for, you can pay for the meal. For spices and sauces, you know,” Weed said.

“I like that, and it works out. I’ll feel better that way.”

A great side job~!

Weed began to collect a little fee for cooking. Of course, it was much larger than the real costs of sauces and spices, but nobody complained about it because they felt it was acceptable, nevertheless.

When the troops stopped by a town on the trip toward Baran Village, Weed purchased a quantity of foodstuffs in a local grocery store.

He needed to update his recipes to improve his cooking skill at a faster pace. Plus, new types of menu that had never been tried before were always received favorably by his customers.

With the foodstuffs he had bought from the grocery store, he was busy working on them on the march and cooking them in mealtime.

Zahab's sculpting knife, besides its original use, it was perfect for peeling potatoes.

‘Well, carving statues and peeling potatoes are kind of the same.’

Meals prepared by Weed basically increased a diner's life by five percent, and as his handicraft skill was in the intermediates stage, it gave off additional bonuses.

Simply put, the intermediate handicraft skill supplements original effects by thirty percent for the sword mastery, and fifty percent for the cooking skill.

Therefore, the final effect on life was an increase of seven point five percent. It might sound trivial, but this difference could save a life in the middle of a chaotic battle where blind strikes were always lurking from behind.

Familiar faces approached Weed, who was immersed in cooking. They were wearing uniforms of the Rosenheim Army.

“Commander!”

Only a handful of NPCs would address Weed by that title. He stopped slicing the meat, lifted his head and saw faces he had seen

before.

“You’re...” Weed said.

“Salute! Greetings to the Commander!”

They were Becker, Hosram and Dale, the brothers-in-arms who had fought alongside Weed in the Lair of Litvart.

“How are you?” Weed asked.

“We were all promoted to Denarion, Commander,” Becker said.

When the soldiers who had been thoroughly trained by Weed were promoted to Denarion, they could not return to their original regiments. So, the military authorities had assigned them with raw recruits and a new mission.

“I guess they told you to join the punitive force bound to Baran Village,” Weed said.

“Yes, Commander,” Dale said. “Once the mission is complete, we will be stationed in the village to secure the surrounding area.”

A number of Weed’s former subordinates, including Buran, were taken under Sir Midvale’s wings, but the rest, now Denarion, were currently serving in the punitive force.

It was Becker's canine nose, that had smelled Weed's cooking and tracked it down to find the former commander.

"Hehe," Hosram laughed.

"I miss your cooking, Commander," Becker said.

"I'm sorry that we are not going to serve you again, but why not show us that old comradeship never dies?"

His former subordinates said as they held empty stomachs.

"How does he know Rosenheim soldiers?"

"They're not foot soldiers. They look like Denarions."

"They just called him Commander."

Surka and Pale could not hide their surprise. A Denarion was a rather weighty position, and the levels of those Denarions were seemingly higher than theirs.

"Okay. Here"

Weed dished out what he was cooking to his former subordinates without reservation. Needless to say, all the supplies rationed to their platoons started to be smuggled to Weed from that moment

on.

*

It took precisely ten days on foot for the troops to arrive at Baran Village.

Weed had intended to improve his cooking skill on the trip. To achieve the intermediate stage of the cooking skill, it required not only proficiency in the skill but also a humongous amount of physical labor.

Back in the days of the Lair of Litvart Weed had served thirty-two men three times a day, ninety-six servings on daily basis, and it totaled three thousand bowls of beef stew.

Then, he had set up an outdoor restaurant to prepare and sell meals in the Citadel. Now that he was feeding hundreds of mouths on the march, it was estimated that he had at least served ten thousand meals.

Provided that a man eats three times a day, it takes ninety servings for a month, around a thousand and eighty servings for the entire year.

Weed had done what amounted to ten years' worth for a single man to accomplish the intermediate stage of the cooking skill, so if you still don't get the picture, you're seriously lost.

Cooking as a hobby isn't comparable to preparing thousands of meals in order to gain an expertise rating for the cooking skill.

Though sculptural art was best to improve the handicraft skill, Weed was afraid to attract unwanted attention by carving statues on the march.

Cooking could pass more easily, making money and winning gratitude, if not respect, from others.

*

The troops were finally within the sight of Baran Village.

"We're almost there."

"What kind of monsters do you think will be there? I can't wait to fight them."

Exchanging small talk complacently, Irene and Surka were walking down the path, while Weed, now finished cooking, and looked up at the sky.

There was nothing there but white clouds that were lazily sailing in a blue sky.

'I knew it. The City of Heaven was nothing but a myth. I was distracted by a stupid myth. Baran Village— the book said it was

the last place with any connection to the City of Heaven. That's why I joined this quest, but I was wrong,' A faint gleam of hope was dispelled.

When the troops marched near Baran Village, Darius cried, "Halt!"

Darius signaled to the entire complement to stop immediately. When Weed in the rear ranks walked to the front, he saw an old man in shabby clothes and dozens of children staggering toward the troops.

"What is your business?" Darius asked; he didn't even get down from horseback—Darius and his minions were the only users on horseback.

"Greetings, Your Respectable Commander. We are the survivors of Baran Village," the old man said. "I am Ghandilva, the elder of the village. I recently sent Jackson to break the sad news of my village's calamity to His Highness and ask for help. I hope you are the ones to lift us from misery."

"Yes," Darius said.

Ghandilva was an elder of Baran Village, and the terrified children who were following him had escaped from the village with him when it was raided by the lizardmen.

"We will take back Baran Village very soon," Darius said to

Ghandilva. “So take comfort and wait a little longer for the good news.”

“I am glad to hear that, you're a respected commander. By the way, I have a personal request...”

Ghandilva said.

“What is it?”

“Please rescue my people who were captured by the despicable these creatures. It is the last wish of this humble old man,” Ghandilva pleaded amid tears.

Darius’ eyes glinted.

“Is this a quest?”

“Yes, it is the quest from my village, your respected commander,” Ghandilva said.

“What rewards can you give me?” Darius asked directly.

As a high-level user, Darius didn’t rush into any quest presented to him. There were too many quests around, and a lot of them only wasted time.

Ghandilva made a downcast face. “We don’t have anything of value to give you, sir. All I can give is this...” Ghandilva showed a plain-looking seed.

“I thought so. What rewards would I expect from an old man who has lost his village to a band of lowly lizardmen? No treasures, no items,” Darius said.

Darius snickered coldly. He thought the old man had come to him to stir up trouble before he got down to driving the lizardmen out of the village.

“Then I will take over the village fast, and if we have free hands available after the battle, I will personally see to it that some troops will be sent to rescue the captives,” Darius said. “We cannot seriously expect that the hostages taken by the lizardmen are still alive by now. Don’t test my patience, old man.”

Darius trotted away from Ghandilva ruthlessly.

Some users in the punitive force called their leader names under their breath, but no one dared rise up to help the elder. Ghandilva was cast into despair. Then, someone grasped his wrinkled hands.

It was Weed.

Book 02: The One Who Does The Worst

Chapter 1: Land Of Myth

Ghandilva, the elder of Baran Village, was in quite a dilemma. The village was once a peaceful village in the southern province of Rosenheim Kingdom and was a home to about 500 households, it was then invaded by monstrous lizardmen, and the villagers had either dispersed or were taken captive.

“I’d like to hear the story of where this seed comes from,” Weed asked.

Ghandilva’s colorless eyes shone with hope.

“W-would you help us when I tell you what I know?” ask Ghandilva desperately.

“Even if you don’t tell me, I will still help your people. When innocents are held captive by evil monsters, how can a fellow man leave it alone and go his own way?”

“Oh!” Ghandilva was struck with an urge to shout for joy. While everyone else dismissed his plea for help, here was a good samaritan who willingly offered his sword for the rescue of innocents.

“Darius-nim declined my request... because all I could offer in return was this seed,” Ghandilva dejectedly.

Certain that Darius was already out of earshot, Weed said carefully, “Those who would weigh the value of a good deed? It is unimaginable to me.” Weed replied.

“To think the world still has such great men left in it...” the elder murmured.

Weed’s eyes casually turned to Ghandilva’s clenched fist.

“Anyways, about this seed...”

“Oh, this? I don’t know what life it bears.”

“You don’t even know where it came from?”

“This seed has been passed down in my family. My ancient ancestors told me to guard it zealously, for it is invaluable. They have told me to give this only in return for a great favor or to a great warrior.”

“I see.” Everything clicked as if two puzzle pieces had finally fit together. Still, even then what he was planning was still a fifty-fifty chance of succeeding and was a big risk.

Was it the seed to show Weed the way to the City of Heaven, or just a plain seed of some random crop?

Among countless professions in Royal Road, there are gardeners

and farmers as well. Unsurprisingly, they're too few to find anywhere.

“Will you rescue my people?” the elder pleaded once more.

Ting

Quest: The Calamity of Baran Village:

Baran was a peaceful and lively village, until the Eastern Border was ravaged by hideous monsters. When the lizardmen raided the village, Ghandilva the Elder didn't have enough time to save all his people.

He escaped, taking only the young. The adults decided to stay behind to stall for time. The wicked lizardmen captured the resisting adults and, instead of beheading them, enslaved them in a stronghold in the Western Valley.

Rescue the parents of the children. If the time runs out, the lizardmen will show no hesitation in killing the villagers one after another.

Difficulty level: D

Reward:

A Nameless Seed

Number of captives: 55

A quest with D level difficulty. It was equal to the Punitive Force quest. Weed still had an A level quest that was to succeed Zahab's will, but it was still far beyond his capabilities for the time being.

To his dismay and annoyance the 'Zahab's will' quest took up one of the three valuable quest spaces in the quest window. This quest was more difficult than anything that Weed had ever done, but he read the quest's description over and over, skipping the difficulty level part.

Parents. The memory of Weed's parents ceased when he was eight years old. Since then, he could only summon up the darkest hours of his life, when the loan sharks had bullied him.

'It was the only legacy left to me.' he thought bitterly.

Still, Weed missed his father and mother. He would pay any price to bring them back to life if it were possible.

As the would-be savior was deep in thought, Ghandilva fretted and asked,

“I suppose you’re not satisfied with the reward?” he asked worriedly.

“...”

“Once my village is restored, we will pay back your debt over time.”

“No, the reward is more than fine. It is more than I could possibly ask for. I will finish the quest as soon as possible.”

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

“Thank you. The lizardmen headed toward the valley near a mountain west of my village. I will eagerly await for your return and good news.”

When Ghandilva left, Weed’s teammates came over.

“Weed-nim, what did you do?”

“Did you just accept the quest?”

Pale and Surka gazed at Weed in disbelief. He had just accepted a new quest that would reward them with a mere seed.

“Don’t ask questions and just accept the quest that I got.”

Weed was the de facto leader of the party. On Weed’s insistence, Surka trusted that there must be a reason, walked over to Ghandilva, and accepted the quest.

“I’m with Weed-nim.”

“We also want to join in rescuing the villagers.”

Ting

Your party has accepted the quest!

When the rest of Weed’s party accepted the quest, but they didn’t understand what the reason was. Pale’s head tilted to the side in confusion.

“I can’t understand why you gave up the punitive force quest and, instead, picked this quest after we came all the way here.”

“This quest will present a great opportunity if I’m not mistaken. And even if I’m wrong, it will still be better than participating in the punitive force quest.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Suppose we fight the lizardmen with the punitive force... At our levels, we can’t gain much in terms of experience and fame.”

They agreed with Weed– their levels were far lower than those of Darius and his group.

They were originally interested in search and destroy missions that would take place after the troops drove the lizardmen out of town, so the large-scale battle meant little to them.

Sandwiched amid two hundred other users at similar or higher levels, Weed’s party couldn’t really do much.

“I have a hunch that we’d be better off switching to this quest,” Weed said.

“But the quest difficulty level is D... Don’t you think it’s too difficult for the five of us?” Surka asked.

“Don’t worry, I have a plan,” Weed said mischievously.

“Okay, Weed-nim. We’re with you,” Pale said resolutely.

Weed decided to accept Ghandilva’s quest, and with this decision made, him and his party, broke away from the ranks. Soon, two men came to Weed’s party. They were Becker and Dale, Denarions officers and soldiers within the Rosenheim Army.

“Commander! Where are you going?” Becker asked.

“We’re just about to go off and fight the lizardmen.” Weed answered with determination,

“My teammates and I are leaving to liberate the villagers, fathers and mothers of the now homeless children, from the lizardman's stronghold.”

“That’s quite a difficult mission!” Becker was startled by Weed’s statement. Dale looked in disbelief.

“Will the five of you be enough to accomplish this mission?” Dale asked with eyes opened wide with concern.

Dale sized up Weed’s party. He concluded that they appeared weaker than he, so he banged his chest and offered his service.

“Commander, we want to support you in this mission,” Dale said.

“Yes. Our commander will give us permission to join you if we explain the situation to him,” Becker said.

The friendship that Weed had built with these NPC’s had showed itself once again. Of course, according to the situation, there are times, such as mutiny or mass killing of innocent villagers, which would keep the soldiers from following orders regardless of their loyalty to their commander.

Charisma and good relationships cannot motivate soldiers unless it is supported by the leader’s fame and status, or a just cause.

In the eyes of the Dale and Becker, it was regarded as a heroic act that Weed had volunteered to rescue the villagers from peril.

As it was also largely associated with the original punitive force quest, they felt justified in helping him. However, after a moment of silence, Weed said, “I am more than grateful to hear that from you both, but that is not possible. You’re currently dispatched to help Baran Village under Darius-nim, are you not?”

“But...”

“The fewer the people for this mission, the better! I ask you to do your best in your task. What if we succeed in bringing back these parents, only to find that there is no place to stay for the rescued families?”

“Aye, Commander.” they replied.

Becker and Dale were persuaded and gave in his refusal. If Weed could get the help of the 200 soldiers from the Rosenheim Army, it would make it easier to set the captives free from the stronghold of the lizardmen.

This was especially the case since these two Denarion, had at one time, used to serve under Weed. The quest would be less burdensome if he had accepted their support.

His high Charisma stat could turn them into a formidable force once more.

Unfortunately, the downside to allowing the two Denarion and their men to follow Weed and his party, would be that Darius would quickly become aware of such a disappearance of a great number of soldiers, once news of it happened and reached Darius' ears he would be sure to inquire into why his men were deserting his force. Which would be bad for Weed and his party. As it was, Darius probably wouldn't notice that Weed and his small party were deserting from the main punitive force of three hundred other users.

*

Weed and his teammates quickly headed for the mountain west of Baran Village, as described by Ghandilva. The Western Mountain had a gloomy and dark demeanor.

A humid fog arising from waterfalls in the valley created the best conditions for the lizardmen.

“I think their territory extends to over here.” Pale the ranger, had improved his vision and observation skills to match with his class. For rangers it was an essential skill, since it allowed them to intercept enemies at a distance. It also helped in analyzing diverse landscapes.

Pale was concentrating on the ranger’s passive skills, such as Rapid Fire and Penetration. As it was the easiest path up to the second job of the ranger class.

Meanwhile Weed, whose class was a sculptor, was stronger than the others on average in sword mastery, thanks to his sculpture mastery and Zahab’s sculpting knife.

“Yes, I think the lizardmen crossed the Eastern border and camped here.” Weed answered shortly, studying the landscape. It was called a valley, but it was larger than most. They were trembling in trepidation that the lizardmen could surprise them from the surrounding forest.

Finally, they encountered the lizardmen warriors. There were 5 lizardmen in a small group acting as sentries. The reptiles resembled giant lizards on two feet with slippery, greenish skin. Their level was around sixty.

“Ew, gross,” Romuna remarked.

Weed could not disagree with her. Monsters in general were repulsive and unsightly. Yet, they hardly scared him.

‘I’ll just use the same strategy as I did on the goblins.’ Weed thought as he was sizing them up.

The lizardmen levels were roughly higher by ten, than those of the goblins, but they were field monsters. Monsters in dungeons or at night were 50% stronger and give more experience. Overall, the lizardmen strength was similar to that of the goblins if you had to compare them.

Weed equipped himself with the iron sword, instead of his bow.

He had been so busy with cooking meals and selling statues, and away from the battlefield for so long that his body was itching for blood.

‘Now I can try one of the sword techniques.’ he thought back with a vicious grin.

The five movements recorded in the skill books were as follows:

Skill: Imperial Formless Sword Technique:

The First Form: Triple

With splendor, you strike an enemy three times consecutively. As the skill improves, the number of strikes and damage increases.

Mana Consumption: 300

The Second Form: Backstab

You instantly move behind an enemy and strike his back.

Mana Consumption: 400

The Third Form: Power Break

You destroy an enemy's weapon by using five times your attack power.

Mana Consumption: 600

The Fourth Form: Sword Dance

You aim at an enemy's vulnerable spot in a dance-like motion.

Mana Consumption: 1000

The Fifth Form: Sword Kaiser

You harmonize with your sword. Concentrate all of your mana and explode into a single point. Mana is consumed to zero, and if the amount of mana is below 2000, your health will be reduced as well.

The one footstep technique was an active combat skill to dodge an enemy attack with seven swift steps.

Weed nicknamed each form in the sword technique individually.

The first form was named Triple, and the rest, Backstab, Power Break, Sword Dance, and Sword Kaiser, respectively.

Weed's mana totaled 940 points thanks to the Emperor's Medicine Tablet. He could execute the skill Triple three times, Backstab twice, and Power Break only once.

Moves beyond the third form were out of the question because his mana could not even sustain them. He could activate the fifth form, Sword Kaiser, without mana, but it was too adventurous to gamble his life on a single attempt.

He labeled the footstep from the skill book as 'Seven Celestial Step'. It alone consumed 100 mana. Fortunately, it lasted at least a minute once it was activated.

‘Let’s see what I can do.’

Weed hadn’t fought once since learning the Imperial Formless Sword Technique.

“In broad daylight, they are not as strong as they’re supposed to be,” Weed said to his teammates in a low voice, “The lizardmen can fight to the best of their abilities in swamps, but they’re far weaker in a valley. I’ll go first and fight them.”

Monsters that have adapted to a dry climate, such as poisonous scorpions and sandworms, are at their strongest in the desert or very hot and dry areas. The lizardmen, whose natural habitats are swamps, were weakened in the open.

Still, his teammates were surprised. Weed had just suggested they assault the stronghold of the lizardmen.

They had been following him to this point, but they counted on him to have a scheme to overwhelm the lizardmen, who outnumbered them.

“Wa-wait a sec Weed! Can we really just walk into their stronghold?” Pale asked.

“Yes, we can,” Weed replied.

“But this quest has a difficulty level D...” Pale said.

“For the difficulty level D, at least eight hundred lizardmen are encamped over there. Am I correct?” Weed asked.

Pale nodded dumbly at Weed.

“Eight hundred, give or take.”

“I’m sure that was exactly the case when we accepted Ghandilva’s request. But we have Darius helping us out.”

“Darius is helping us out?” Pale asked confused.

While Pale shook his head in puzzlement, Weed distributed tiny flasks to his other teammates.

“What’s this? Isn’t it a potion?” Romuna asked.

“This is a drink I brewed right before we left the Citadel. I bought empty flasks from a pharmacy at a cheap price,” Weed said.

“Why are you giving them out now–” Surka said.

“Drink it first, and you’ll see,” Weed said.

Weed gulped down the drink.

Ting

You have drunk: Brandy of Vitality

Effects:

+100 Health

+10 Strength

+5 Agility

Decreases your sense of pain in case of an injury.

Weed’s teammates emptied the flasks and looked stunned.

“Can’t believe this brandy did...” Irene said.

Surka had recently reached the legal drinking age, so she was particularly susceptible to alcohol. Drawn to the fragrance of the brandy, though, she drank it to the last drop and found the

pleasant sweetness rather tasty.

“It wasn’t fermented for a long time, so the effect is limited. The upshot is, though, you can drink it with meals without hangovers,” Weed said.

Weed, who had finished drinking the brandy, was already moving toward where he presumed the lizardmen warriors were stationed.

Darius counted himself lucky. If not, he could not have been assigned to such a rare quest such as leading the punitive force.

The punitive force quest bound to Baran Village. It could elevate his fame to a higher level. A higher level of fame was accompanied by many benefits, and quests were no exceptions.

He could meet distinguished figures in key positions that he would have been denied to him otherwise, and easily gain more high-risk, high-return quests.

With three hundred troops under his thumb, Darius already viewed himself as some sort of an army general. The punitive force that was led by him finally arrived in the vicinity of Baran Village.

The wooden fences, which had been set up to keep monsters out, had collapsed, and the door of every home had been kicked in and

broken.

The troops looked at the scene from over the hill. There wasn't a single monster to be seen in the village, but they couldn't relax. Darius turned and asked one of his comrades.

“Parros, go scout the area.”

“Okay. Stay here and wait until I get back.”

Parros was a thief. With extremely high agility and observation skills, he swiftly slipped in the village. About an hour or so later, he returned, panting, and reported, “There are hundreds of lizardmen hidden inside! They're waiting for us to come closer.”

“They're aiming for a chaotic battle.” Darius muttered.

Darius' eyes gleamed icily. Obviously, the lizardmen, outnumbering his troops, were trying to reduce them to a full-scale melee. On the other hand, he also welcomed this kind of combat.

In the climax of confusion of the battle, Darius and his group having the highest levels among the troops could score the most kills, and as a result, would get the most glory.

“An expected known ambush is not an ambush. Just charge ahead to Baran Village!”

The troops stormed to the village. Suddenly, all of the lizardmen that were hidden in the houses came crashing out like a scaly tidal wave.

Roar

“Humans!” They hissed.

The lizardmen, who were basically muscular reptiles, held a shield in one hand and swung a blade in the other.

Most users were shocked by the amount of lizardmen charging toward them. Darius had decided not to inform them that the lizardmen were hiding there. Beheading a lizardman warrior, Darius grumbled to himself under his breath, “I don’t need the weak. All I want is the strong who are loyal to me. So, why share experience and fame with these weaklings?”

Darius used these tactics on purpose, at great risk of heavy casualties, solely because he was concerned that his share of EXPs and fame would be reduced if they were equally distributed amongst the other three hundred user.

The soldiers in Rosenheim Army followed Darius from behind. Their commander was Sir Jovantes.

When the knight realized they were trapped in a melee, surrounded by lizardmen who were leaping out from all directions, he shouted, “Stand your ground! Form a circle by platoons, and

fight back!”

Platoons of ten soldiers began to build circular human fences, the signature battle formation for Rosenheim Army. The platoon leaders were Denarions, such as Becker and Hosram.

“Going into defensive formation!”

‘Taking defensive formation!’

“Same for us!” Hosram yelled to his men.

Almost all of the Denarions who had been educated by Weed made the same decision. Defense comes first! Only Becker stood out, “Let’s go get ‘em!” he roared.

The Rosenheim soldiers who were forming defensive circles distracted and lured lizardmen into a honeycomb formation.

They locked down the enemy, who charged into a maze of endlessly twisting passages.

In and out of the defensive circles, Becker and his ten troops emerged from nowhere and butchered the lizardmen who got lost.

*

As Weed approached the lizardman warriors, they let out their usual aggressive shrieks.

“Human!”

“Foolish humans! You come to die?!”

The five lizardmen warriors charged toward him, brandishing their blades. The level of each lizardman was low, but it was compensated by their number.

If Weed was encircled by them, he had to face each of them from all directions putting him in a disadvantageous position.

Weed was confident though. He had raised forty points of strength, agility and vitality for a month in the Training Hall.

If you heard about it, you would probably think it was a simple thing to do. Then, you would wonder why no one else did the same thing.

With higher stats, it's much easier to hunt monsters. But think about it carefully. It takes one whole month of beating the living hell out of a scarecrow. One looong month. Would you be able to tolerate the boredom and physical hardship?

If you do it for twenty hours a day, it will add up to six hundred hours within a month.

You have to repeat the same action continuously while in constant pain, which feels as if your muscles are being squeezed and burned at the same time, and even professional athletes don't go that far.

Professional athletes in general spend no more than five hours a day on just focusing on exercising. Weed had been through 120 days' worth of exercise that an average athlete would do.

If you look at it from a different perspective, it's equivalent to earnestly working out for an hour every day in a fitness club for two years.

There weren't many people who would sacrifice so much time in order to raise forty points of several stats.

The fact that Weed finished the course in only one month exemplifies how persevering he was. He also had the sword techniques that he hadn't tried before. He rather welcomed the lizardmen.

Weed and Surka were standing on the front-line to confront the charging lizardmen. Given that their party lacked a warrior or a knight, those two had to take the role of the melee fighter.

"Eh, well, Weed-nim," Surka said.

"Yes?" Weed asked back.

“If I die, please save yourself.”

Surka looked pessimistic in the face of the five lizardmen.

“Don’t worry, Surka-nim. If any of us go down, I’ll be the first. As I will be the one to aggro them,” Weed said confidently.

“Weed-nim, you’re a sculptor. Oh, by the way, what’s your level?” Surka asked.

“It’s 68.” he answered.

Weed briskly plunged into an opening in between the lizardmen.

“Watch out!” Surka said.

His sudden action threw his teammates into utter confusion, but he was composed.

“Seven Celestial Footstep!” Weed cried.

He confidently activated the footstep technique that he had named, a skill to dodge enemy attacks with seven eccentric, unpredictable steps.

Charging forward, he suddenly disappeared right in front of a

lizardman, and emerged on the right of it the next second.

“First form, Triple!” Weed cried.

Weed moved dizzyingly and swung his sword. Three silhouettes struck the lower, middle and top part of the lizardman’s body at the same time.

Bam Bam Bam!

The lizardmen were stronger than goblins. Their body had the flexibility of reptiles, and high speed. Their overall attack power wasn’t that impressive, but what was terrifying was their greenish scaly hide.

The thick scaly hide was a defense of its own, and they were even wearing plundered armor that they had looted from other races, which made them even more difficult to deal with.

Kwaak

Damaged by Weed’s skill, the lizardman cried heavily in pain. It had so far lost 80% of its health and was near death. Mana consumption for Power Shot, Pale the ranger’s signature skill, was 25 points.

Compared to that, Weed’s skills were mana drain sinks. However, as much as it was a mana drain of 300, its power was just as deadly as the drain.

Surka, right beside Weed, watched the whole scene unfolding before her eyes. She had gone through a number of battles with him to date, but nothing like this...

Since he killed the wolf and saved his teammates selflessly, he had been the leader of their party. Ever since he became a sculptor, he had started cooking.

The whole thing was incomprehensible enough, but it seemed that his combat ability had not vanished.

‘I don’t know what skill it was, but that was awesome!’ Surka thought.

She felt as if three swords pierced the lizardman almost at the same time when Weed used Triple.

‘I can’t lose to him!’

Surka punched the lizardman that Weed had already attacked. She wanted one of them down for now. The lizardman had fallen, stunned by his Triple attack, so it could not avoid her punch.

“Rapid Shadow Fist!” (Yon-hwan-kwon).

Since the enemy had a higher level than Surka, she used her best skill to begin with. Clenching her fist, she threw five jabs in a row.

It was a basic, yet one of the most popular, combat skill for monks. Her expertise rating in Rapid Shadow Fist (Yon-hwan-kwon) was already at 65%.

Pabababak!

The lizardman that was hit on the chest and the solar plexus turned into a gray flash.

“What the?!”

Surka was petrified for a moment due to shock, even though she was in the middle of a fierce battle.

“Sure it was stunned. But why did it die so quickly?”

In stunned mode, a monster is unable to move, and is damaged twice as much when hit.

Still, Surka felt cheated that a lizardman, who at level sixty, was so easily knocked out by her punches.

The other lizardmen were not idling away, either. When their comrade was attacked, they roared in fury. Four blades were flying toward Weed almost at the same time, cutting off every possible option for dodging.

However, his body evaded like a reed in the wind. Three of the blades barely scraped his head, leg and shoulder. The last one that he could not dodge cut into his side, leaving a lengthy wound, but the damage was lessened to one third.

Ting

You have lost 350 Health Points! (-350 HP)

One of many penalties for the sculptor class is that they are not allowed to wear heavy armor made of iron.

Defensive gears made of non-metals are typically weak in defense unless they are made of special materials or enchanted with a permanent spell.

Though Weed was wearing a basic leather jacket that he had bought at a really cheap price from a second-hand store, even a single strike on him could be deadly if he wasn't careful...

“Sculpting Blade!”

Weed's sword, enveloped in a translucent flash, sailed toward one of the lizardmen once again. It was targeted at the neck that

looked pretty sturdy.

Pierce

It was another one of Weed's signature skills that was aimed at a vital spot with great timing!

Ting

CRITICAL HIT!

The Sculpting Blade, ignoring the enemy's defense, and dealt great damage to the lizardman. The only flaw was that it consumed an enormous amount of mana. Had that not been the case, he would have used it every time.

Along came Romuna's spell. "Fire strike!" she yelled.

A pillar of flame split into four fireballs in the air, and struck the lizardmen. The side effect of the spell was to push the enemy back, temporarily giving melee fighters a precious break to catch their breath.

“Fire arrow!”

Pale held the lizardmen in check with arrows. His arrows contained the element of fire that was fatal to them.

“Healing Hand!”

Irene quickly regenerated Weed’s diminished health. Then, she cast a spell of holy blessing.

“Goddess Freya, lay your protection of the Holy Spirit upon Weed. Strengthen him against evil powers. Bless!”

Holy blessings empower defense and strength. There are countless types of spells designed to boost various attributes.

A shaman’s voodoo art speeds up and increases strength and agility temporarily. A holy knight’s aura over an entire party is deemed pretty effective too.

But it is ultimately a priest or priestess’ blessing that beats all in the field of buffs. If you fight for a long time under the influence of a blessing from a priestess, you will feel almost powerless without them.

Once Irene finished what she was originally assigned to do, she pitched into Weed sharply.

“Weed-nim, you were too reckless this time.”

Weed nodded apologetically. In truth, he had fought a lizardman unprotected on purpose to experience their strength.

Moreover, he had been interested in figuring out how much damage the Imperial Formless Sword Technique could deal.

The outcome surpassed his expectations. Each and every one of the combat skills that Weed had at that time demanded an unsustainable amount of mana. So he couldn't afford a prolonged fight because his combat skills simply consumed more mana than he could ever maintain.

But the skills were the most dominant in a small-scale battle. They gave Weed a ridiculous amount of power until his mana ran out.

When the amount of usable mana increased, in accordance with level ups, and the mana consumption for sword-related skills dropped, thanks to his better expertise rating in sword mastery and handicraft skill, the Imperial Formless Sword Techniques would shine.

However, in the eyes of Weed's teammates, he just looked reckless. They didn't know that his level was sixty-eight, and they had a prejudice against the sculptor class, thinking he was weaker than his counterparts.

It was true that the defense of a sculptor was pathetic. Except for spell-casting classes, the sculptor class was one of the most vulnerable ones in Royal Road.

Instead to balance this, Weed had the Sculpting Blade, and since his conversion, the effect of sculpture mastery had been fully blended into his unrivaled attack power.

A fragile sculptor. Though the future was yet unknown, Weed was more of a damage dealer than a stronger sword warrior for now.

He smiled at Irene's buffs as his strength had risen by twenty percent, and he felt clad in comfort.

Ting

You have lost 230 Health Points! (-250 HP)

Weed let one of the lizardmen strike him again. He was damaged much less due to the holy protection of Irene. It showed that she had raised her expertise rating in the skill meanwhile.

‘That’s what I love about hunting as a party.’ he thought smugly.

Priests and priestesses are respected and valued everywhere for their distinct ability. Regardless of their skill level, any party is eager to invite them.

Even though Irene was a bit low in her level, she had sharpened her skills and was the most necessary asset in hunting monsters.

The bandage skill that Weed had learned only worked when he was not in combat. Although it was still incomparable to a priestess's Healing Hand right on the spot. After reproaching him, Irene gave a small smile.

“But it's just like you, Weed-nim, to charge at mobs.”

Weed never turned his back on monsters coming to get him – because in them, there were those lovely EXPs! Except for fighting monsters that he found it too difficult to face at his current level, Weed enjoyed jumping into the horde of monsters and slaying them.

While moving his arms and legs like crazy, he felt the wind of freedom. He collected EXPs, leveled up, picked up items and upgraded his skills.

Each step was so much fun, and the result was always worth every drop of his sweat and blood. Previously, in The Continent of Magick, and even now, Weed was always the first man to engage with monsters at the sight of them.

“Triple! Backstab!”

As soon as his mana was regenerated, Weed triggered his combat skills. It was his priority to raise the level of his skills. Consumed mana was being refilled, anyway.

Ting

You have failed to activate the skill!

Since his skill level in many combat skills was virtually close to zero, he often failed to activate the skill.

When the sword techniques didn't arrive, he was stunned into immobility for a few seconds. During this moment, Weed counted on his teammates and persisted in trying out his combat skills.

He felt comforted to know that someone was always behind his back. His unassailable attacks took care of the lizardmen in the blink of an eye.

“ ... ”

When the battle was over, his teammates looked at Weed in a daze. Their tension had been high at the thought of confronting five lizardmen, but it ended even before Surka or Pale came close to any serious danger there way.

“Weed-nim, that skill...”

“It’s too strong.” Pale and Surka complained almost at the same time.

“Uh, well...” Weed said.

“You’ve leveled up so much. I don’t think you really need us,” Romuna asked.

“That’s not true.” Weed shook his head. “It drains me of at least three hundred mana points, and that’s for the weakest movement. So I can’t use it more than three times in a row.”

“Ehhhhh!?” they all said at the same time.

Weed waited for the shock to sink in.

“I only have two hundred and thirty mana points total. This means I can’t even try it once... Then, Weed-nim, can you tell us how much mana you have since you can use it three times?” Pale asked in disbelief.

“A little over 900,” Weed said.

“Oh my goodness!”

Pale looked shocked. Romuna the mage and Irene the priestess had around 500 mana points.

Their mana points were rather above their level, but the incredible amount of mana that Weed claimed to have made their jaws drop.

Weed briefed them on what had happened to him. His quest in converting to the Legendary Moonlight Sculptor class was simply beyond any conventional wisdom.

A user selects his primary class by level five on average, and here was a man who converted to the sculptor class, at around level 60 and after weathering numerous trials.

Pale sighed, “You were not just a sculptor, but the Moonlight Sculptor. A hidden class. I didn’t know that you were also the rumored celebrity sculptor in town.”

“Rumored?” Weed asked back.

“We heard that some guy was making statues and selling them in the Citadel of Serabourg. We wanted to buy some, but we were

short of cash,” Irene said.

Irene looked at Weed with yearning eyes. It was unmistakable what she wanted from him.

“I wasn’t really trying to hide it from you, but, anyway I’ll make a statue for each of you later.”

“Thank you, Weed-nim!” she screamed gleefully.

“Same here.”

“I’d like to have one if you don’t mind,” Pale said.

Weed promised to make a statue for every teammate in his party.

“Now we have enough rest. Let’s go and kill some more lizardmen. This quest has a deadline, so we’d better finish it before it’s too late.”

“Sure.”

Weed continued leading his teammates through lizardmen that got in the way. In most cases, Weed started with critical damage to the enemy, and Pale and Surka picked up where Weed left and finished them off quickly.

Romuna was responsible for eliminating one or two lizardmen in the distance if there were more than the others could handle.

The rest were taken down by Weed and Surka while the other teammates rested to recover some mana points. Their coordinated combat tactics were well matched.

In the past, lots of foxes, wolves and bears had fallen victim to them, leaving fur and meat behind them, and now the victims had switched to unsuspecting lizardmen.

The pace was much faster than when Weed had hunted on his own, and by contrast with the clean-up operations in the Lair of Litvart with Rosenheim soldiers, Weed and his teammates were synchronized in a party system, which meant that earned EXPs were collected and fairly distributed among them.

Weed didn't need to try to give the final blow to a dying enemy. Had he stood idly, he would have received a minimum share of EXPs due to his small contribution, but that wouldn't be like Weed.

“Wow! These reptiles are richer than they look, aren't they?”

Surka exclaimed at the sight of the items dropped by the slain lizardmen. The booty included a steel gauntlet and breast armor. Besides that, they obtained a ring.

Ting

Item: Mana Ring:

Equipped:

+3% Increase to maximum Mana

It was the first time that the party had ever seen an accessory like a ring.

“Who’s going to take this?”

At Surka’s words, everyone looked at each other, but the mana ring ended up in Irene’s possession since they agreed that the battles would be safer as the priestess had more mana to support the others.

The rule for splitting spoils in the party was whoever picked up an item kept it. A rare item often changed hands according to the general will, but miscellaneous items otherwise destined for the general store were open game.

It sounded like a very unreasonable rule, but they found it acceptable given the nature of their party. If they had chosen someone to take charge of item storage, it would easily exceed the

weight limit for how much he could carry. That was why they let anyone gather items up to their weight limit.

Weed and Surka, who were active in battles, were usually the last to pick up an item, aware that when they could not carry anything else, the battle was as good as over.

This was the current structure of the party so there really wasn't much of a choice.

Once they began to fight, they went all the way to the end. Since they had already decided to penetrate all the way into the stronghold of the lizardmen, the battle would not be over until they had killed every last lizardman standing.

Chapter 2: The Statue Of The Goddess Freya

As Weed and his teammates came closer to the lizardmen's stronghold, the number of monsters falling in their way increased rapidly.

“We already took down more than forty lizardmen...”

“We're still at the border. How many more do you think are gathered deep inside?”

Irene and Romuna spoke in turn. But Weed only smiled.

“Look, you all know the lizardmen are group-living monsters, don't you?”

“Yes, Weed-nim. They herd together more than Orcs,” Irene said.

“That's right. They also protect their own territory jealously. What if someone steps over it?” Weed asked.

“They fight back without exception!” Surka said.

“That's right. That's what makes the lizardmen fearsome among users.”

“Doesn’t it mean we’re in trouble now?”

Weed and his teammates were going through a valley. They often rested in the middle to recharge mana, and wasted no energy.

At this point, he gave away the riddle.

“I’d say we would be in danger under normal circumstances, but we can count on Darius now.”

Because of Weed’s revelation, they realized where his confidence was coming from.

“What do you mean by that—oh, I got it!” Surka said.

“Darius is really helping us out!” Romuna said with a smile on her face.

The stronghold of the lizardmen.

By now they should have been fighting viciously against the punitive force who had invaded their territory.

In other words, the base camp would be nearly abandoned, and only guarded by a handful of lizardman warriors.

At the sometime, Weed guessed that the treasures that the lizardmen had plundered from nearby villages were stacked over there as well.

He was climbing the western valley in order to accomplish Ghandilva's quest, but his real agenda was hidden.

"We will face a more difficult enemy from this point on. How about baiting them now?" Weed asked.

"Roger!" Surka said.

"We should be careful. We can't allow many lizardmen to take on us at once," Weed said.

Surka did a great job baiting lizardmen one by one. Her outstanding agility helped her lure the enemy separately.

"Come on, you ugly reptiles!" she called out to them.

"Kruru!"

"Human, we kill you!" The furious lizardmen quickly gave chase after Surka. Weed and Pale quickly loaded arrows into their bows, targeted the lizardmen and shot them.

Sweesh

While Weed shot one arrow at a time, Pale shot multiple arrows so fast that his hands were almost invisible.

Their skill levels in archery made a fair difference, not to mention the effects of Pale's other skills.

Weed's archery had advanced beyond his overall level as he had sniped at the goblins, yet he could not possibly rival Pale whose hands had never left his bow.

For Pale, even before an arrow hit a target, the next arrow was already loaded and launched.

Since level five, when he converted to the ranger class, he had been upgrading the Chain Shot and Penetration skills, which rendered his arrows more powerful.

Weed shot arrows until the lizardmen got too close to him. The damage was low, yet his expertise rating in archery improved nonetheless.

No, the bottom line was that his temperament didn't allow him to sit back and wait for his enemy.

Why should I wait for EXPs, no, I mean, the enemy to come?

Weed loved to fight, he just never got tired of it. He was unstoppable now.

“Yatz, yatz, yatz!” From out of his mouth, came another battle cry that burst forth.

Irene and Romuna giggled. They had once mentioned this to Weed already, who had to admit he couldn't help it.

For him, it was a roar of triumph that came out only when he was overly excited.

Fortunately, there had never yet been a time when monsters had heard him and rushed to get his party, though he was constantly embarrassed by his involuntary habit when he was fighting shoulder to shoulder with other users.

‘Weed is always composed, but he sometimes goes out of control and becomes so childish,’ Irene thought.

They encountered six lizardmen in a ludicrous battle.

The moment the battle began, two of the lizardmen were slaughtered by Weed's sword, and there were four more to go.

He left those four monsters alone because if he had taken down all of them, Romuna, Pale and Surka would be denied precious EXPs.

Worse still, Weed's mana would run out while Irene's mana

remained in excess, which would compel the entire party to take a break in order for him to refill his mana. They would waste valuable time, falling further behind the deadline of the quest.

Two lizardmen went after Surka, but the other two, in a fury, charged at Weed to exact their revenge for the loss of their comrades.

Weed's sword was in need of repair, below ten in durability. Given that a powerful sword technique gives an excessive burden to the weapon in use, further lowering the weapon's durability, he had been engaged fiercely without a rest.

“Disarm the iron sword.”

Weed returned his sword to the inventory and clenched his fists.

Surka's signature skill!

“Rapid Shadow Fist!” (Yon-hwan-kwon).

Weed's fists lashed out at the enemy incessantly.

Although he had called out the skill name, it wasn't actually like he activated the skill itself. Because He hadn't even learned it in the first place, let alone be able to use it.

Instead, he imitated the way Surka had used her fists to the best

of his knowledge, and beat the living crap out of the lizardmen.

Wanting to hit monsters with his own hands, he had learned martial arts for a year, waiting for that moment.

Needless to say, his punches were terrific.

Pabababak

Weed's hands moved at an invisible speed.

In clubbing the lizardmen mercilessly with his fists, his intermediate handicraft skill added an extra fifty percent to attack power by fist.

“Ugh!”

“Human fists, they hurt!”

Weed closed on his enemy, punching at every opening. The lizardmen swung their blades in retaliation.

The bottom line was, the lizardmen and Weed were both obsessed with looking off the other before being finished themselves.

Weed's footsteps were light. Any time his body rocked, a punch

was thrust into a lizardman. His ankles and waist moved at his will and drew strength for the fists, which in turn struck the lizardmen's stomach and chests.

“Kugh!”

“Treacherous human, he hits the same spot over and over!” The lizardman wailed in pain.

“Weed-nim, keep up the pressure!” Irene was busy healing the frontline leaders from behind.

Her expertise in healing was acknowledged, and whenever her teammate's life went down below seventy percent, her Healing Hand touched the needy. It is risk-free and effective.

Weed was greatly enjoying the firsthand sense of punching the living hell out of the enemy. He preferred hand-to-hand combat to sword fighting, for he could feel it, and it felt more real.

The lizardmen and Weed were pummeling each other, but it wasn't the same for the lizardmen. The lizardmen's faces were filled with pain, but a smile hovered on his face.

He was whirling his mighty fists, crying out with excitement.

Meanwhile, Romuna and Pale were quickly casting magic spells and shooting arrows, respectively, to get rid of the other two lizardmen that had fastened onto Surka.

Without a hope in sight, those two lizardmen facing Weed were having the living hell beaten out of them, yet they were still alive.

Ting

New Stat: Perseverance

The perseverance stat is mostly generated by warriors in the first rounds of their adventure.

When it is developed, it reduces physical damage inflicted by the enemy, and even increases the user's life by a small amount.

One could invest some stat bonus points from a level up in the perseverance stat, but the majority chose to let it develop itself by receiving melee attacks. After the perseverance stat was added to his stats, Weed's movement became more tactical.

He checked how much mana Irene had and intentionally let the lizardmen strike him with their blades. It was a stat that grew by the amount the user was hit. This was truly a power you could obtain only through pain and suffering.

Weed was a person that gladly accepted the lizardmen's attacks as long as they were acceptable and were within Irene's mana limit to heal.

In Royal Road, you can actually feel hurt when you're hurt. Weed even enjoyed the pain.

“Kueeek!”

One of the lizardmen finally perished with a death cry.

Weed achieved a stirring feat by punching a lizardman to the point of death in the battle.

The other three lizardmen were sandwiched by Romuna, Pale and Surka and were killed.

Weed had killed three of them alone, but it would not have been easy even with the iron sword unless Irene constantly regenerated his life. The victory required all five of them in the party.

*

Surka went fishing for a group of lizardmen in the distance when there were two or more groups of lizardmen nearby.

If it had not been the case, Pale would simply shoot an arrow at them, or more often than not, Weed would be the first man to

move.

Weed would run right into the ranks of lizardmen and swing his sword freely. His teammates would run after him and help finish the monsters off. After which point, they would walk away victorious. This was what Weed liked about his teammates most.

They were usually chatty and noisy on the march, but when it came to a battle, they would fall silent and get serious.

They had been thoroughly trained by Weed.

Since they had hunted foxes in front of the Citadel, they had learned how to hunt monsters rapidly and economically.

When they entered the lizardmen's stronghold after neutralizing a handful of lizardman guards, they found a bunch of straw huts scattered in the forlorn valley.

'The captives are over there,' Weed thought, as his eyes shone.

The parents of the children were confined in a cage made of woven branches.

Weed studied the situation for a while.

There were ten men and women locked in the wooden cage, and he located eight lizardmen mounting guard over them.

Eight of them!

With little consideration for mana, Weed could finish two, or three at most, in a blitz, but in that case, his teammates would have to deal with the other five remaining guards.

He was certain that they would prevail in the end, but Irene and Romuna, who were low in life and weak in defense, could end up dying. Mages and priestesses could be seriously endangered by only a few wild strikes from a lizardman.

“We’d better rescue the captives first. I’ll lead the group away.”

Surka knew it was time for action, and moved.

“Human!”

“How she get here...”

“Kill first!”

When Surka approached the lizardmen, five of them began to chase after her. Instead of pursuing her, the other three lizardmen stayed behind to keep an eye on the captives.

‘They’re not as foolish as I thought.’ Weed made eye contact with Surka on the run. They nodded.

–Whisper–

– Weed-nim, I will race in a circle along where we came from, and come back here.

– Thank you, Surka-nim. That will be enough.

Weed and Surka struck a quick deal through whispers.

Assured that she and her pursuers were out of sight, Weed and Pale appeared in front of the remaining lizardmen.

“More humans!” they yelled.

“Human, come again!” The three lizardmen stammered in surprise.

“Sculpting Blade technique!”

“Fire arrow!”

“Power shot!”

The guards survived barely a second against the human intruders. Weed and Pale downed them in a split second and opened the gate of the wooden cage.

The parents stayed inside, though, scared out of their wits. Weed could sympathize with how terrified they probably were, having been captured by the lizardmen and waiting for death that could come any second.

“We are here by the request from Ghandilva, the elder of Baran Village,”

Weed said to the villagers.

“The-the elder...?”

“Yes, he asked us to rescue you and take you all back home safely. Is anyone wounded here?”

“This way, please...”

Weed went into the wooden cage and gave first aid to the wounded with herbs and bandages.

That measure alone restored their health greatly.

“Weed-nim, Surka-nim is back,” Pale said.

Surka, who had been leading the lizardmen away from the cage, was coming back.

“Stay in the cage for a minute. Get ready to leave for now. You want to see your children again, don’t you?” Weed said tenderly to the villagers.

Some would have counted the villagers as a liability, and, as a matter of fact, they were right in a sense because his party was responsible for rescuing the captives from the lizardmen and guaranteeing their safety all the way to Baran Village.

But Weed thought one step further.

‘These lovely EXP points!’ he thought gleefully.

What Weed was carrying out was a rescue mission.

For each head saved, he would receive extra EXP points as a reward when the mission was completed. He had given up fame and EXPs from the punitive force quest to exterminate the lizardmen, but this one was still a good bargain.

Weed and his teammates finished off the five lizardmen that returned on Surka’s heels. They quickly hid the villagers in a safe shelter, and then searched for more captives, who were eventually found and rescued as well.

Their disappointment though, lay in what the lizardmen had looted and stacked.

Orcs and goblins collect gold and gems. In stark contrast with those crow-like creatures, lizardmen in the class Reptilian hardly gathered anything valuable when they plagued human civilization.

So all that Weed's party found were a mountain of shields, armor and weapons made of iron.

*

Weed and his teammates swept the armaments together without leaving anything behind. The maximum weight that a user can carry depends on his strength and stamina.

Even Irene and Romuna were stumbling toward the village with heavy loads on their backs.

Of course, it wasn't only his party that carried arms.

"We saved you." Weed said to the rescued villagers. Their faces showed some uneasiness at his words.

"Naturally we're not asking for any compensation for what we have done. All we want is a seed that Ghandilva, the elder of your village, has promised. This is because we didn't save you for reward

or profit .”

Reassured, the villagers looked less anxious than before.

Smiling gently, Weed added, “I understand you’ve gone through trouble a lot, but would you mind helping as carry those arms down to the village?”

“.....”

The villagers’ faces underwent another sudden change.

They were extremely weary due to malnutrition. The last thing they wanted to do was anything that might compromise their return to home.

“As you see, this valley is something close to an impenetrable fortress, and I’ve heard that Orcs often appeared here.”

At a mere mention of Orcs, the villagers shuddered in terror. They had barely survived the lizardmen, and if Orcs were the next calamity to deal with, they knew it was going to be a hopeless case.

“Just in case, suppose that the Orcs find this place – they will rejoice over those arms stacked here. They could take up the arms and sweep over Baran Village down in the valley. So I think the arms should be removed from here. Will you please help us?”

Persuaded by Weed, the villagers ended up carrying as heavy loads as they could possibly manage and walking down the valley.

Meanwhile, the lizardmen in Baran Village had been wiped out by Darius and his troops.

The village was devastated, but the rescued villagers wept in delight for their return anyway.

At the front gate of Baran Village, Weed said to them again, “Thank you so much, my friends. We could not have made it here safely without your care and support. I will take over here, so you are free to go back to your children. They’re desperately waiting for their mothers and fathers.”

The moment Weed finished his speech, the villagers put down the heavy arms and scattered, looking for their sons and daughters.

Ghandilva was waiting with children in a clearing near the gate.

“Mother!”

“Father!”

“Selen, Marron, I’m glad you’re alive!”

It was a touching reunion between children and

parents. Ghandilva walked to Weed, smoothing his white beard.

“You have finished the quest, Weed-nim.” the elder stated.

“Yes, sir,” Weed said humbly.

“I am very grateful to you that you rescued all of my fellow villagers. Honestly, I did not expect you would accomplish so much... You did a great job. None of us will ever forget what you have done for us.”

Ting

Quest Completed: The Calamity of Baran Village:

The dispersed families in Baran Village were reunited by the brave heroes who were willing to see justice done.

The village was destroyed by the lizardmen's raid, but the crowing of roosters and the barking of dogs will be heard soon.

The children are relieved to see their parents again. Till the day their eyes fill with tears from their parents' scolding, the children will have gratitude for the brave heroes.

Fame has risen by 15 points (+15 FAME)

Quest Reward:

Nameless Seed

You have leveled up!

The fame and EXP were distributed equally to everyone in the party, but the seed was given directly to Weed who was the party leader.

“We in Baran Village owe you.”

“No, Sir. We have only done what we were supposed to. We will always do our best to preserve Baran Village’s peace and prosperity.”

There are many factors involved in receiving a quest.

NPCs may beg anyone who they run across them if they want a quest to be done urgently, but most of them will wait for their favorite user, if any, to appear to solve their problems instead of trusting a total stranger.

“Darius, I think you’ll regret this.”

Weed had won considerable trust and gratitude from Elder Ghandilva and from the villagers who had been rescued by Weed’s party, they would also feel deep indebted to their saviors as well, and this would work to their advantage when shopping and other services in the village itself.

If Darius assumed that he had nothing much to gain from Baran Village, he would not be worried. But he would have to pay for his mistake if he had planned to expand his power over the Southern province based on his status as the commander of the punitive force.

Obviously, this subtle friendship rather than material reward was more likely to turn into the biggest asset in the future.

Darius would not have rejected the quest under normal circumstances, but he had been the commander of the punitive force.

It would have been a tough decision to abandon his mission to lead his troops to defeat the lizardmen for a major credit, or to instead, rescue a handful of villagers from their stronghold.

For that reason, Weed understood Darius, but pitied him at the same time.

Opportunities like these don’t present themselves often. Like an

unforeseen accident from nowhere, they come and go.

Ghandilva suddenly clasped Weed's hands.

"I am reminded that I have another favor for you, Weed-nim. You're a trustworthy man. I heard from soldiers in the punitive force that you were a sculptor. Am I mistaken?"

"No, Sir" Weed said calmly.

"We used to have a statue of Freya that we all worshipped in the central square of the village."

Freya was a goddess who is widely worshipped in Rosenheim. She was known to govern fertility and beauty.

Ghandilva said with a gloomy face, "We have always prayed for peace and prosperity to the village statue of Freya. But it was smashed in an accident earlier this year. Now that I look back on how things have turned for the worse, I suspect that the absence of the statue caused all of those troubles."

"Do you me want to restore the statue of the goddess?"

"Yes, Weed-nim, I want you to carve a new statue of Freya. I originally asked another plausible foreigner to bring a replacement, but I have not since heard from her. It's urgent. Would you please carve a statue of Freya?"

Ting

Quest: The Statue of Goddess Freya:

Freya, the goddess of beauty and fertility is the patron goddess in Baran Village. The statue of Goddess Freya stood in the central square, but it was destroyed by a pine tree when a flood knocked the tree down. Though the lizardmen are defeated, the villagers will not live in peace until the statue of Freya is restored.

Build a statue of Freya in the village and bring peace back.

Difficulty: Class restricted quest.

Quest requirement:

Only available to Sculptors.

It was a class quest reserved to sculptors. The difficulty level and rewards for the quest were undecided because they depended strictly on the outcome.

The rewards for most quests were settled by the same rule.

Except for definite missions such as messengers or couriers of certain objects, the rewards varied to a great degree on the outcomes.

“Please wait here. I need to consult with my teammates.”

When Weed said so, his teammates, who had been listening to the conversation vacantly, grinned and congratulated him.

“Congratulations, Weed-nim! Good luck,” Surka said.

“I thought we made a mistake when we ditched the punitive force quest, but now I am proud that we did,” Romuna said, smiling.

“Ladies Surka and Romuna, thank you,” Weed said. “But if I accept this quest, I can’t go hunting with you all for a few days.”

Weed sought consent from his teammates, and Pale was eager to give it.

“It’s fine with us. What’s left for the punitive force quest is to run around and sweep up pockets of resistance. Since we’ve already encountered our fair share of lizardmen, I believe we can do it on our own. To be honest with you, Weed-nim, you have a far higher level than the rest of us, so we really want you to take this quest.”

Pale lifted the burden off Weed's shoulder. The truth was, his teammates were a little uneasy at learning up with someone whose level was way above theirs.

As Weed played the role of the main leader and damage dealer in most battles, they felt like accessories to his adventure. For true teammates, everyone had to be put on equal terms, and the party could not work together as long as others were conscious that they were indebted to one person in particular.

"I see. Then i'll take the quest," Weed said, and walked to Ghandilva.

"I will make the statue of Freya, sir."

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

"Thank you, Weed-nim. Please get ready and build it as soon as possible," Ghandilva said.

When Weed and his teammates left the village, Becker and

Hosram approached them along with their subordinates.

“Nice to see you again, Commander,” Becker said.

“Where are the others?” Weed asked.

“They are chasing after lizardmen on the run,” Hosram said with a grin.

Weed thought that the other soldiers were pursuing the remnants of the lizardmen that had been driven out of the village by the troops.

“What about you?” Weed asked.

“Sir Darius ordered all the soldiers from the Rosenheim Army to stay behind,” Becker said.

Weed suspected that Darius had assigned the Rosenheim soldiers to defend the village, so he could keep all the credit to himself.

Only the Rosenheim soldiers were left behind on sentry duty in the village.

*

Weed led his party to a secluded place. The seed was in his hand.

“Oh, by the way, speaking of the reward that we got after we rescued the villagers, what in the world is the seed for?”

At Surka’s question, Weed just looked down at the seed and said, “To be honest with you, I have a strange book. The book has this story written in it...”

The City of Heaven!

When Weed told them about the book he had received from Volk, even the usually calm Pale could not help but be shocked.

Every adventurer on the Versailles continent has a dream.

A fantasy continent. A land of living legends and mysteries. To leave footprints of his own on an undiscovered territory where no pioneer preceding him has ever been.

To explore in an unknown dungeon and shed light upon its secrets.

A man who discovers a new horizon earns many opportunities besides enormous fame. The opportunity to grow, and the opportunity to die.

“The City of Heaven—are you serious there is such a place? I heard of the City Under Earth...” Pale said.

“The City Under Earth?” Weed asked.

“Yes, it’s known to be a subterranean city deep down in the earth, and that the dwarves built it. Their palace is located there.”

“Can those users who select the dwarf race in the beginning go to the city?”

“Not really. I heard not every dwarf was allowed to get into the city. There are very few people who know the place. If you get there, you can acquire the expert blacksmith skill, and learn the artisanship skill, too.”

The dwarves.

They were headaches to Weed having chosen a sculptor’s path.

For a human user to learn the handicraft skill, he needs to select a primary class related to craft skills.

A sculptor can learn the handicraft skill in the stage of basic sculpture mastery.

In Weed’s case, he had obtained it even before he chose the class, for he had finished the unique serial quest about Zahab’s successor. But not everyone is half as lucky as he was.

Be assured that almost no one receives such a windfall.

Cooks and blacksmiths have to advance their skills to at least the intermediate stage to learn the handicraft skill. A tailor can learn it when he raises his skill level to eight in basic tailoring skill.

Unless you choose a craft class, you cannot reach the intermediate stage of any craft skill. So if you want to learn the handicraft skill, the tailoring skill is a must-have.

But dwarves are born with the handicraft skill right after the activation of a new account.

With boundless stamina and imposing strength by nature, dwarves even have superb handicraft!

Weed could not relax his vigilance against the race.

However, being a Dwarf does have its own drawbacks. Instead, dwarves are short in height, and penalized in spell casting, horse riding and expert combat skills.

Weed wanted to visit the City Under Earth someday.

“If I get the chance, I’d love to go there,” Weed said.

“It won’t be easy. I heard they are very hostile to humans. Only good artisans are respected there. Unless you win a certain degree

of recognition from them, you'll be denied entry to the city," Pale said.

Sculpture masters such as Zahab and Geihar Von Arpen could have entered the City Under Earth.

I have a hunch that there's probably something related to the sculptural art's mystery down there.

That intuition aside, Weed took out the unidentified seed that he had received from Ghandilva.

"Alright. Let's go for it. If I am wrong, we wasted our time for nothing," Weed said.

"I'm sure your decision was right."

"I have a good feeling about this."

Irene and Romuna cheered Weed up.

Burdened by his teammates' expectations, Weed used the identification skill carefully.

"Identify"

Item: Seed of Heavenly Tree:

Durability: 1/1

Requirement:

You must sow it near Baran Village.

Special Effect:

Guides to the City of Heaven.

Once Weed read through the description window, he closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them again.

His teammates were impatiently waiting for him to deliver the good news.

“This is real.”

Once Weed gave the confirmation, the rest of the party members cheered. However, there were still matters to discuss.

“I don’t want as to be seen sowing the seed and climbing up to the City of Heaven.”

Weed was going to take his teammates there, but introducing it to Darius and his minions, or even other members in the punitive force, hardly appealed to him.

Selfishness, or you could call him self-centered if you wish.

Still, it was Pale, Surka, Irene and Romuna that had been through the unofficial mission along with Weed to get hold of the seed.

“I agree with you. If there is a City of Heaven, it will be eventually discovered by someone and become available to everyone, but it doesn’t need to be us to do that,” Pale said, seconding Weed’s suggestion.

It wasn’t a case of monopolizing the information. It was more than those in the know deserved to be able to use that knowledge.

If everyone learned of the existence of the City of Heaven, the merits of their discovery would be diminished, and what Weed had done so far would not bear any fruit.

Living by kind and righteous morals was a foolish thing to do.

Imagine if they went public with the City of Heaven, who would unveil his own secrets, or share his own quest to whom appreciate

their naïveté?

“I think so too. It’s too early to tell anyone else about this,” Irene said.

“Let’s go there alone,” Surka agreed.

They soon came to a common agreement on the matter.

Yet leaving for the City of Heaven was put off for the time being.

Weed had to finish his Statue of Goddess quest, and the punitive force quest for their other teammates was still underway.

They decided to head for the City of Heaven once they were all done with the quests.

They were half excited, yet half worried about exploring a new region. If it turned out to be too tough for them, they would possibly end up enjoying the scenery in the sky and coming back in vain. Such exploration always held such hazardous possibilities.

*

Weed cooked up a good excuse for Darius and his troops, who had been reported to be returning. He was afraid that they might question why his party failed to show up in the battles.

When they returned to Baran Village, however, the battered troops numbered less than a hundred, and they were quarreling with one another intensely.

“You’re responsible for this!”

“Why are you making a scapegoat out of me?”

“Your pathetic plan got Collonya killed in action!”

“It is his responsibility to take care of his own life.”

“Now you’re blaming the dead man!”

While winning back Baran Village, and cleaning up the remnants of the lizardmen, the troops had suffered heavy casualties.

To begin with, the group of total strangers was incapable of executing organized tactics, so they ended up losing many clueless users in the middle of dogfights.

As a consequence, there was no love lost between Darius and the ranks in the punitive force.

“It was a battle, part of a war, that we just participated in,” Darius said. “Inevitable casualties are always a part of war, aren’t they? Get over it.”

“A few casualties? Are you calling the death of Collonya an ‘inevitable casualties’? You don’t give a crap about it? It’s all because of your bad leadership!” the angry user who had lost his friend shouted.

“Wasn’t it you who eagerly accepted to obey my bad leadership? I am tired of quarreling with you this way when the battle was decisively won.”

“What the hell!”

The quarrel between Darius and his ranks got worse.

With such heavy casualties, nobody cared if Weed and his teammates had run off during the mission.

Weed studied Darius and his minions. None of them looked hurt, all alive and well.

“I bet they took most of the EXPs for the punitive force. They forced the other users into a trap, and only went into battle when the lizardmen got weak and to finish the reptiles off.”

In a mid-size battle, it was up to the army leader how to fight, possibly changing the whole outcome of the battle.

Weed later learned that the lizardmen, hidden in a forest, had sent some of their fellows out to bait the hook users.

A forest is where they fight best.

A large army is rather immobile in a forest area where defenders are better placed than offenders.

Darius and his minions had engaged with the bait, and the main force had been ordered to penetrate through the forest.

While they were toying with the bait lizardmen, the main force had been trapped in the jaws of death.

When the main force eventually exhausted and wounded most of the lizardmen, Darius and his minions, who had finished off the bait, suddenly appeared, slaughtering them!

To sum it up, Darius and his minions had collected the most fame and EXPs.

“I did my best. I killed the most lizardmen, and my friends rescued you. Show us some respect,” Darius said calmly.

“What? Do you think we don’t know what you’re up to?”

“How can he say something like that? He’s not as clever as he thinks.”

“Darius is just some second-rate leader.”

When the users in the punitive force began to denounce their commander so loudly, Darius and his minions finally revealed their teeth.

“If you have the guts, stop mouthing off and fight a duel with me like a man,” Darius said.

“You wouldn’t be here in the punitive force if I hadn’t picked you, women.”

Weed looked at Darius and the other users in the punitive force cynically.

You are all fools. Weed thought.

Darius had spread a bad reputation about himself among general users in exchange for a handful of fame and public service points.

Sure, he had missed a bigger fish and went ahead to catch the smaller one right in front of his eyes. You have to pick up small ones without making a noise, and catch the big ones boldly. Then, you look around to see if there is something else you missed. That is the right path.

Still, the other users in the punitive force could not be forgiven for their collective folly.

What had they seen in Darius to obey him unquestionably? If they had stopped to throw a little doubt on his intentions, they would not have played to his fiddle.

It was their fault in trusting a stranger too much. If they had been more cautious, their friends would still be alive.

Chapter 3: The Lost Treasure Of The Temple

“Good luck, Weed-nim.”

“If you make the statue look like me, I’ll reward you.”

It was decided that while Weed was carving the statue, his teammates would wander, hunting monsters with other users.

A handful of surviving lizardmen still harassed the local population, and there were fine hunting spots around the village.

Weed had already revealed himself as a sculptor, so the other users assumed that his quest was related to his profession, and nobody raised a question about it.

“Godspeed”

Once everyone else left, Weed stood motionless in the central square of the village.

He noticed that there were several Rosenheim soldiers and returning villagers.

They watched him with hopeful eyes.

“I should find a rock,” he said to himself.

Needless to say, the statue had to be made of stone.

Weed was most accustomed to wood carving, and it was the first time that he had ever handled stone.

Fortunately, there were many rocks in the neighborhood that were fit for his purpose. Baran was, after all, a backwater village stuck at the foot of mountains.

From the rocks, he finally chose one so large that a grown man could not embrace it with his arms.

“Let’s go.”

Weed took out a hammer and a chisel to cleave the rock.

Ting

Item: Hammer and Chisel for Sculpture:

Durability: 10/10

They are a set of items for stone carving. Relatively cheap, they are dull and easily breakable. Careful handling is recommended.

Equiped:

Sculpture Mastery +1.

Weed had bought them from the sculpture shop in the Citadel of Serabourg just in case, yet he had never thought he would actually use them on the trip.

Clang clang clang!

“The only difference between stone and wood carving is the material. Sculpture is all about the mental image and about how to shape an object from it. All I need to do is reproduce the image in my mind. It will bring the best statue, my own statue, out of this stone.”

Weed handled the rock carefully. Shaping stone demands more time and energy than you can ever imagine. A little shock on a wrong spot and the crack will spread all over the stone. A statue should have guaranteed longevity. Beads of sweat flooded Weed's forehead from concentration and physical exertion.

By day two of his task, the rock was trimmed very little compared to day one, for Weed had so far failed to picture the definite image

of a goddess.

Goddess Freya is known only to possess the utmost beauty. No living creatures have ever seen her actual appearance and this is why sculptors and painters alike are often challenged when creating artworks of her.

Artists are always dubious how to depict the Goddess Freya to realize her beauty to the full extent.

For this reason alone, she has never been portrayed identically in paintings and statues.

The artists have had a real headache over this issue. However, at the same time, it stimulates and challenges their pride and skill as artists.

Suppose two rivals carve statues, or paint paintings, of the Goddess Freya, and what if the goddess depicted by one is more beautiful than the other?

Painting skills aside, the goddess of beauty is only appreciated as long as she is the most beautiful of all, so the one with the more beautiful artwork will claim all the credit in the end.

‘Beauty. I have to carve the most beautiful Goddess Freya on the continent.’ That was the only subject filling Weed’s head.

That was why Romuna joked that she wanted him to model the

statue on her.

Claaang! Clang!

The speed of the hammer and chisel working on the rock was slowing down, as Weed dug deeper into his thoughts.

‘How, and who should I shape this statue after?’ Weed’s mind became a tangled maze as he followed one thought after another.

Though this profession of becoming a sculptor was not originally his choice, slacking on an assignment given to him was against his temperament. If the completed work turned out to be mediocre, it would hurt his pride as a sculptor. Plus, his fame would vanish, which he could not overlook nor allow.

“Who should I take, who...”

At that very moment, someone’s image dawned on Weed.

“She would be...”

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The hammer and chisel began to pick up speed at last.

The rock was gradually trimmed off, the outline of the statue

surfacing little by little.

As shards from the rock fell to the ground, the statue got start to show it's shape.

A beauty beyond veiling.

An angel descend from the celestial realm and learns to smile.

Her smile envelopes the world with light.

She is but a single maiden.

‘Seoyoon’

The statue that Weed was carving was based on Seoyoon. He had looked at her face only once during the barbecue feast in the instructor's house, but he had never seen any beauty comparable to hers.

Even a movie star could not rival her in raw natural beauty, where mysterious and noble dignity had combined. Yet there was a decisive flaw in her.

She never smiled, and her face was empty of any known expression. On the other hand, the statue was smiling a serene smile.

A lady in a traveler’s outfit, holding a sword.

To his shame, Weed had become quite enamored by the statue that none other than he was working on. He had thought he would just try to imitate Seoyoon’s pretty face, but as the hours passed by, he felt his heart throbbing at the sight of the statue’s smile.

The statue that held a mysterious charm to captivate people endlessly was on it’s way to completion.

“Oh my!”

“Look at that!”

Though only the general outline was roughly drafted, the Rosenheim soldiers were glued to the sight.

Even villagers had gathered, laying reconstruction work aside, and appreciated Weed’s work on the statue.

Ting

Statue: The Goddess Statue of Freya:

Freya, the goddess of beauty and abundance, is the patron

goddess in Baran Village. Her statue once stood in the central square, but it was destroyed by a pine tree when a flood swept the village.

Ghandilva the Elder laments over the destruction of the goddess statue, and requests you to find a replacement and bring it back.

*

A user entered Baran Village through the gate. She was clothed in a traveler's outfit, but her face was hidden behind a robe.

Seoyoon.

She had already removed the scarlet sign of Murderer from her forehead by slaying lots of monsters, and none of fellow users. So her name was no longer cast in bright red anymore.

‘There are more people here. It's disturbing, I just want to fight.’ she frustratedly thought

Seoyoon slowly walked away and headed for Ghandilva's house to complete her quest. In an enchanted backpack that could store ten times the weight and volume of its original capacity was a statue of the Goddess Freya.

Ghandilva's house, which she had not visited for months, had been largely destroyed by the lizardmen.

At the moment she was about to open the door–

“You're really great! The Goddess Freya that you have created is really beautiful!”

“You're flattering me, sir. The statue is only halfway done.”

Seoyoon could hear people inside talking.

“I cannot describe how much I appreciate you, Weed-nim. When the statue of the goddess is completed, my village will become peaceful life once again. I will never forget your kindness. Please help yourself.”

Munch munch

Now Seoyoon could hear someone devouring their meal.

Flattering the instructor back in the Training Hall– Weed had used the same formidable trick on Ghandilva the elder of Baran.

“.....”

Seoyoon dropped her hand from the doorknob.

*

Two months earlier, Seoyoon had left the instructor's place, and headed south.

She had wandered only in the unpopulated hinterlands and occasionally visited the backwater villages, fighting monsters all the way.

Either mountains or lairs had suited her as long as there were more monsters.

Battle after battle.

As long as Seoyoon could fight, she could forget everything else in it. Eventually, she had drifted to Baran Village.

The village had been peaceful back then, well before the lizardmen's raid and occupation.

‘Whew... What should I do now?’ she thought briefly.

Seoyoon had visited the village to purchase food and dispose of her spoils by selling them in the village market. As she was walking through the village center, she had accidentally overheard Ghandilva sighing.

The Elder had been grieving over the destroyed statue of the goddess on the spot where it had once been, and at the sight of Seoyoon who happened to come by, he had asked her for a favor.

“You appear to be the right person to find a replacement for the destroyed statue of Goddess Freya to my village! Would you please grant the last wish of a dying man?” asked the village Elder.

Ting

Quest: Restore the destroyed Goddess Freya Statue:

Freya is a goddess who is widely worshipped in Rosenheim. She is known to govern fertility and beauty.

Baran Village are devout worshippers of Freya and had always prayed for peace and prosperity at the town statue until it was accidentally destroyed.

Quest requirement:

Before the Elder dies.

Reward:

Gratitude of the villagers and payment

Mute as always, Seoyoon could not take most of the quests available to other users. Thus she had been unable to build friendship with NPCs, let alone users, and was nearly blind to Royal Roads background information and history.

All she could do in any given town was selling items she had obtained, and buy items she needed.

However, she had nodded at Ghandilva who was in grief, and accepted the quest.

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

The right choice to finish the quest was to go back to the Citadel of Serabourg, buy any female statue there and bring it over, but she had set out to find the real one.

Her destination was the Order of Goddess Freya.

Through Brent Kingdom in the north, and across the Halkos Wilderness in the southwest, it was the Free City of Somren.

The Order of Goddess Freya was located there.

It would be a long journey of about three months by the official route, but she could make it within a month if she hiked over the Bark Mountains in the west.

Travelers of a sound mind avoided this route because they had to survive an enormous number of monsters.

However for Seoyoon, being the crazed battle maniac that she was, had carved her way through the Bark Mountains.

Over the countless corpses of monsters, she had arrived at the Order of Goddess Freya and bought a statue of Goddess Freya, which was even endorsed and blessed by Archbishop Mandolin.

For that, she had spent most of her gold.

“.....”

Seoyoon turned away from Ghandilva's house. On the way to the gate, she stumbled on the central square of the village.

There was a statue standing that she had not seen before.

A yet-to-be-completed statue of Goddess Freya.

“Isn’t she really a beautiful goddess, traveler?”

A maiden spoke to Seoyoon. But her eyes were transfixed on the statue.

“Weed, one of the heroic saviors of our village, is carving the statue of the Goddess for us. When it is completed, my village will stay free of monsters and we will live in peace once again. I cannot imagine what would happen if he were not here for us...”

Seoyoon looked at Weed’s statue. It was incomplete. Yet it was strikingly beautiful. It was almost dazzling to her eyes.

The statue of Goddess Freya radiated a splendor that relaxed onlookers all the while It showed a benevolent and comforting smile.

As she looked on the statue, she felt that smile was transforming the world into something brighter, a more positive.

The other statue of Goddess Freya that she had brought was a masterpiece found in the Order, it was also of a high aesthetic value and had an aura of piety.

However, now that she looked at the statue carved by Weed, she thought that hers was petty, like the glimmer of a firefly in the face of a rising sun.

“.....”

Seoyoon looked on at the statue for a while longer and left Baran Village in silence– without noticing that the statue made by Weed was modeled after her.

*

Tremble

Even Weed who feared nothing under the sun, felt his fingers shaking at that very moment. He had devoted over ten days of solid effort to this work.

Since the news of a new statue of Goddess Freya was widespread, a swarm of spectators had visited Baran Village.

Aside from the punitive force and Rosenheim soldiers, people came even from the nearby city of Demeron. With a final touch on the eyes of the goddess by Weed, the statue was completed.

“What a goddess!”

“Goddess Freya is really descending on us in our village!”

Villagers and spectators exclaimed. It was very noisy with chattering, and prayers from the faithful who knelt down before the statue.

Then, a message window visible only to Weed popped up.

Ting

Statue Completed: The Statue of Goddess Freya (Fine):

Art is not always recognized for the it's style and skill of the work in question. It is worthy of being called great art as long as it touches many hearts and cleanses many minds.

The statue of Goddess Freya, of outstanding beauty, despite low expertise in Sculpture Mastery, will hold the public eye forever.

Artistic Value: 150

Special Effects:

+15% Increased health and mana regeneration for 25 hours.

This effect does not stack with other statues.

Number of Fine Pieces Created: 1

‘A Fine piece!’ Weed thought excitedly.

This title is only granted to artworks recognized by users. Extensive skills alone cannot produce fine pieces, grand pieces, or master pieces in sculpture mastery.

Only when a sculptor devotes himself to create a work of soul and heart that is highly appreciated by other users, only then does it deserve any of the above titles.

In other words, the completed Statue of Goddess Freya was extraordinary by any measure. As the statue earned the title of fine piece, it was given an option, too.

Still in the basic beginner stages of Sculpture Mastery, Weed wasn’t qualified to produce an artwork with options. Never the less, combined with Zahab’s sculpting knife, his fine piece generated an exceptional effect.

This was a jackpot that over-reached even his own expectations.

Ting

Level up: Sculpture Mastery (Beginner Lv: 9 | 0%):

Enables you to produce more delicate and detailed works.

Fame has risen by 50 points (+50 FAME)

Art has risen by 15 points (+15 ART)

Perseverance has risen by 10 points (+10 PER)

Vitality has risen by 5 points (+5 VIT)

A bunch of stats rose in return for creating a fine piece.

Weed's basic sculpture mastery finally reached the expertise rating of seventy percent at level nine, on the verge of upgrading to the intermediate stage, and his fame shot up as well.

Still, he felt cheated.

“Shoot.”

A fine piece didn't come out anytime.

Weed's current skill level in the basic sculpture mastery was nine, but when he was busy carving the statue, it had been only eight.

It had been applied as skill level seven in the intermediate stage, though, thanks to the hammer and Zahab's sculpting knife.

Technically speaking, fine pieces were almost impossible below the intermediate stage of sculpture mastery. He was aware that if he had not been empowered by Zahab's sculpting knife, he could not have produced such a beautiful statue of the goddess.

His skill level in sculpture mastery was still lacking.

Had Weed reached the intermediate stage, or even the expert one, before he carved the statue of the goddess, it could rank among the pantheon of grand pieces, not far from master pieces.

Then, he would have received five stat promotions, one of the few privileges limited to sculptors.

Other sculptors, fewer than a handful on the continent, besides Weed the Legendary Moonlight Sculptor, lack combat ability.

They are denied access to spell casting in the first place, not that their strength and defense are anything other than contemptible.

The handicraft skill compensates low attack power only a little for them.

No party of sound mind would allow them in, so they have to overcome lots of bloodshed single-handedly.

The sculptor class relies on stats that are raised higher than average users at the same level by such a fortune.

It didn't mean, though, that a sculptor can develop his sculpture mastery and produce fine pieces and beyond any time he desired. Even a highly reputable sculptor is incapable of producing fine pieces and grand pieces at his discretion.

A fine piece is created only when a sculptor melts his soul into the mold of an image of the ultimate beauty.

Suppose you go through hell for ten days to carve a statue, and it turns out to be a mediocre work, slightly affecting your stats, how would you feel about it? Worse enough, what if it rather cuts down your hard-earned reputation as a sculptor?

You will be praised if you don't jump off a cliff from it. There are actually many former sculptors who delete their avatars after exactly the same demise.

Sculptor is such a hard and tough profession.

Ghandilva approached Weed and grasped his hand.

“Thank you, Weed-nim! You’ve made such a great statue of Goddess Freya, and we villagers will be forever blessed in her presence. Also, the tidings of the statue will bring more even more travelers here. You’re now the second founder of Baran Village!”

Ting

Quest Complete: The Statue of Goddess Freya:

Ghandilva sincerely appreciates your work!

The statue of Goddess Freya erected in Baran Village will shore the villagers up in hope and courage. They will welcome you anytime in the future.

Fame has risen by 30 points (+30 FAME)

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

Your influence in Baran Village has reached: 60%

1st: Weed: 60%

2nd: Darius: 45%

3rd: Seoyoon: 33%

As the work turned out way better than wildest expectations, the rewards for the quest were accordingly unprecedented.

A quest with three level ups could rank amongst the highest in difficulty level D ones.

Plus, his public service to the village shot up his influence to first place.

Public service depends on various factors. If you are recognized for public service, than enlarging your influence in a town, you can purchase items in bulk at a discount there, and you are even eligible for a government position such as an elder or a feudal lord.

Weed had rocketed in public service by collecting credits for the rescue mission on the captive villagers and the production of the Statue of Goddess Freya, as well as selling weapons and gear that his party had looted from the lizardmen's stronghold.

In the case of Darius, needless to say, he was the leader of the punitive force quest to win back the village.

Then, for Seoyoon, she had slaughtered a number of threatening monsters around Baran Village, and sold furs and items to the general store.

Before Weed and Darius came to town, her influence in Baran Village had been indisputably number one.

“Seoyoon is in third place? She’s been here before?”

Weed heart skipped a beat, probably two...

When he modeled her for the statue during its production, he had been confident that she would never come here and take notice of her own image.

The Versailles continent was vast enough.

If she had seen this statue, she might just smile coldly and behead him without question.

‘She’s a murderer, so it isn’t a remote possibility at all!’

Especially if Seoyoon ever read Weed’s writing engraved on the statue, she might kill him over and over, easily beyond hundred

times. No, he'd better brace himself for the worse.

Upon completion of the statue, Weed had been very satisfied with what he had created.

He had yet to know if it would turn out be a great, average or even a failed work, but he had still been enchanted by his own artwork.

So, purely out of attachment, he had left a short epitaph on the bottom of the Statue of Goddess Freya with Zahab's sculpting knife.

A trait no Korean can get rid of!

Weed asked cautiously, "Excuse me, Elder Ghandilva?"

"What is it, Weed-nim?"

"Was it Seoyoon that you requested to find a replacement for the statue of the goddess?"

"Yes, she is the one. So you know her, too? She is a fine lady. She accepted my strangest request, though she has not come back yet..."

"I see." Weed replied calmly.

Weed was relieved that Seoyoon had not returned by now. If she had come back when he was in the middle of carving the statue, he was afraid what sort of hell would have broken loose.

‘She might have killed me in revenge for me stealing her quest!’

As the job was done, he wanted to leave for the City of Heaven as soon as possible. He wanted to get the hell out of town before he ran across Seoyoon again. But Ghandilva didn’t let go of his hand.

Ghandilva lowered his tone and said “I have something to tell you, the savior of my village, Weed-nim.”

“Go on, please.” Weed replied patiently.

“Do you believe in destiny? I do not think it is an accident that you came to my village.”

“Excuse me?”

“A priest from the Order of Goddess Freya once visited my village and told us that evil was raging. They are expanding their influence in the invisible realm, lower than where we are, and in the dark and cold. The priest from the Order of Goddess Freya declared that only the ‘Courageous One’ could defeat them! He then granted me the power to select the Courageous One.”

“.....”

“I did not fully comprehend what his words meant at the time, but I now do! I have not revealed this secret to you; the seed that has passed down in my family will serve you as guidance to a new land. The priest told me to find a man by the name of Seagull, in order to get back the Lost Treasure from the Temple of Freya. Find him. Become the Courageous One who shall defeat the evil!”

Ting

Obtained information regarding the Lost Treasure of Freya

‘This is a follow-on quest to the Statue of Goddess Freya! It doesn’t look like it has any downsides. Awesome. To think that such an opportunity would come to me!’

Weed acknowledged his fortune once again. Part of it was attributed to Seoyoon, who had failed to show up with a new statue, and in turn, opportunity had found him.

“It is my long cherished wish to prevent evil from raging in the world. I will do my best to recover the lost treasure from the Temple of Freya.”

“Thank you.”

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

Weed concluded the conversation with Ghandilva and headed for his teammates who had been waiting for him.

“Great job, Weed-nim. I never thought that a statue could be so beautiful,”

Pale said looking at the statue with fevered eyes, which was very unusual for him. Surka, Irene and Romuna looked intensely moved as well.

There levels had reached around mid-sixties by hunting monsters continuously and with little sleep while Weed was busy carving the statue of Freya.

“It’s amazing. It looks so real. It’s the most beautiful statue I’ve ever seen.”

“I bet even Goddess Freya can’t rival this statue in beauty.”

“How did you create such an image? I can’t help but admire your exquisite aesthetic sense and artistic soul...”

Weed felt more than a little embarrassed by their praise.

Exquisite aesthetic sense? Artistic soul?

Their eyes betrayed that they had been too shamefully blind and dull to recognize a once-in-a-lifetime artist, though he was always right there before their eyes.

Who? You mean, Weed? Saying that he was power-hungry would be more plausible.

‘Would they believe it if I told them I was clueless until I actually got to work? No, I don’t think so.’ Weed thought amusedly.

What’s the point of telling them something that they wouldn’t believe, anyway?

A good salesman doesn’t tell you everything when he knocks on your door to sell something. A good salesman hides the flaws and highlights the merits of the product he’s trying to sell.

The bottom line is: what is good for you is the best policy.

“I made this statue as I pictured all of you in my mind, Ladies Irene, Surka and Romuna. Your pure hearts and pretty faces are cherished in the statue, so it looks as beautiful as it is now.”

“Oh my!” they breathed out, deeply touched by Weeds words.

Girls are simple creatures, aren't they? All the girls in Weed's party were happy to hear such a flimsy lie.

“Hey, you're that Weed, right?” Darius said, as he came up to where Weed was and his party were standing.

“You're quite good at sculpture mastery. Is that a grand piece?”

Darius was well versed in many fields of knowledge. At level one-forty, he must have picked up a few pieces of information about sculptors somewhere.

“No,” Weed said.

“Then, is it a fine piece?” Darius asked.

“Yes,” Weed said.

“Oh, I never believed I'd see a fine piece. I heard there were less than a hundred sculptors who ever created fine pieces...”

Darius showed his surprise with exaggerated gestures. Then, he made a feline smile.

“Congratulations. I guess you earned quite a number of stats for this. At least some good fortune should befall to sculptors who are pitiful in abilities sometimes.”

Darius made light of Weed, solely based on the fact that he was a sculptor.

In fact, most sculptors are weak. Their combat skills are contemptible even if they have higher stats that are raised by the production of fine pieces and whatever else.

Even if they know a powerful combat skill, they don't know how to fight properly.

Why do they choose to be sculptors?

It is because they are poor at fighting in the first place. Many fights beget good fighters.

For most users who belong to non-combative classes, they are simply inept in fighting.

They usually get confused, as they are ignorant of how to respond to an enemy attack, and lost to what role they should take in a party.

The elementary combat skills that they can learn are ineffective in general, and even the expertise rating is low enough to be ridiculed by their teammates.

Plus, they have to practice their sculpture mastery to become a full-fledged sculptor, so they are weaker than their counterparts in everything, including their overall level, provided that the same hours are invested in building their avatars.

Of course, Weed was the exception!

“Hey, watch your mouth.”

Pale, one of Weed’s teammates stepped forward in a fit of passion. He could not stand Darius holding his teammate in contempt.

Then, all hell broke loose.

“How can there be someone like this guy?”

“His face looks like a skillet covered in grease after cooking sausages in it...”

“Fools never think before they shoot off their mouth. Weed-nim’s so good at fighting...”

Surka, Romuna and Irene shot back, respectively.

Young Surka was hot-blooded enough to say that! Romuna, who had her own share of anger from time to time, was expected too. But what really threw Pale and Weed off was that, was of all people, Irene, always a calm and gentle soul, had flared up.

Women...

There was no way that the dense Pale and Weed could have known that those three girls together could easily change someone's status into 'kill-on-sight' when needed. Even if Weed's judgment doubled or tripled, he would never fully comprehend half the aspects of women in his lifetime.

It is foolish to assume that you know a woman just because you can make her happy with a few compliments.

“.....”

Weed missed his chance to get angry.

However, he took his revenge in the thundering denunciations from the girls.

“Wha-what was that?”

Darius' eyes sparked. But neither Irene nor Romuna flinched in

the slightest.

“Why, did we say something that wasn’t right?”

“How dare you...”

“So what’re you going to do? Kill us?”

“Do you think I’ll let you get away with this?!”

Darius was about to pull his sword out. If he, Level 140 warrior, was resolved to have a bloodbath now, Weed and his teammates could not withstand him.

No, Weed could stand a chance if he succeeded in realizing the best of his potential. His level was in the seventies. But, with his inflated stats, he was close to a level 100 warrior.

Considering his cheat-like skills and combat ability, he was certain he could beat Darius.

Utilizing the element of a surprise, and given that Darius was writing off Weed, seizing the moment when he wasn’t prepared for it, Weed could beat the hell out of him in a flat minute.

The only problem was that if the duel lasted longer than a minute, Weed would run out of mana because of pouring it into combat skills, and would end up dead for sure.

Weed wasn't afraid of Darius in the sense of stats, but he knew that his weakness lay in the duration of the fight. He was, so to speak, a typical case of premature ejaculation, a man's number one secret fear. Surely, he was still stronger than average users at his level after he spent his lifetime on mana booster.

“Darius, take it easy!”

“Let me go! I'll teach those bitches some manners!”

“You're the commander of the punitive force. You can't pick a duel with your subordinates. If you do that, do you know how many of your fame points will drop? Do you really want to give up the quest altogether?”

Parros and other minions from Darius' party held him back. They talked him out of bursting into a rage, and he calmed down at last.

“Okay, I'll forgive you this time.” At Darius' comment, Romuna just poured more scorn on him with a sneer.

“Who do you think you are to decide who forgives whom?”

“Everyone makes mistakes, but he acts like he's royalty or something.”

Surka's final blow almost ignited the second round of the quarrel, but by then other members of the punitive force had been drawn by the commotion, and gathered around them.

Darius and his minions had already lost respect and credibility. On the other hand, Weed and his teammates were deemed respectable. For one thing, Weed had cooked great meals throughout the march.

He had even repaired weapons and armors when broken, and for unidentified items, his free service of item identification was invaluable.

His other teammates had been kind to other users except for Darius, so their reputations were good enough.

While Weed had been busy carving the statue of the goddess, Pale and the girls joined several parties for hunting, and their steadily upgraded skills and swift hunting tactics made them a favorite for any party.

Weed later learned that Darius and his minions had to hunt alone because no one else bothered inviting them. Under those circumstances, Weed was in a far stronger position.

Parros, one of Darius' few friends, said in an arrogant tone, in the place of Darius whose face was frozen in silence, "We are member of Ica Guild. I'm sure you've heard of it. It's one of the three top guilds in Rosenheim."

Weed had of course heard of Ica Guild. It was notorious for bad behavior, hardly surprising after he saw how Darius had acted.

“We’re planning to occupy a city in the near future, so we need a good hanging plate. Would you come visit us later to carve one? We’ll pay you well.”

In the end, Darius had only visited Weed to request the hanging plate. But he had been in a terrible mood for a while now.

He had succeeded in the punitive quest with elation, but what was left in his pocket was much less than predicted.

It was because someone else had already stripped the lizardmen’s stronghold of all its items.

In a rage, Darius and his minions had been looking for the culprits, but they could not possibly suspect Weed, the mere sculptor who was carving the statue of Goddess Freya, and his teammates, objectively speaking, whose low level exempted them from the list of usual suspects.

During their private investigation, they had made a series of terrible blunders that caused more friction between them and other users, while Weed had received a solid quest from Ghandilva the elder and completed the Statue of Goddess Freya, as if to rub salt in their wounds.

To put it bluntly, Darius was jealous.

So he had spoken to Weed rudely, and it eventually twisted the whole thing into a more complex knot.

*

As soon as they were through with Baran Village, the punitive force led by Darius packed their stuff and headed northward to return to the Citadel.

There were some users who liked nearby hunting fields, but the village itself hardly appealed to them. There was no pub where hunters could gulp down icy cold beer after a day of rich games. A glass of beer after a day's hunting.

Everyone missed the delicate taste sluicing down their throat, and hurried out to leave town.

It was decided that Baran Village would be protected by the Rosenheim soldiers.

Weed and his teammates reported the punitive quest directly to Ghandilva.

“Thank you for your service. We will always remember what you have done for the sake of us villagers.”

For the reward of the quest, Ghandilva gave Weed twenty fame

points.

Since he was carving the statue while other users were hunting down the remnants of the lizardmen, he had practically given up on it, but it unexpectedly turned out to be a great gain for him.

Other users at level eighties in the punitive force received between ten and fifteen fame points.

Weed thought that rescuing captive villagers and robbing the lizardmen's stronghold had worked a mini-sized miracle.

Weed and his teammates told Darius that they wanted to stay behind to hunt monsters there, with an excuse that they still had low levels.

"Now is the time," Weed said.

At his statement, his teammates smiled expectantly.

"Yes."

"Then, let's go to a dark, quiet place."

"Of course, to a very, very quiet place... To somewhere we're not going to be seen." Romuna covered her mouth with a hand and chuckled coquettishly.

If one heard her, they might misunderstand.

Two men and three girls headed for the Western Mountain out of Baran Village. Once the lizardmen's stronghold, it was now secluded enough to meet their need for quiet.

“La la la.” The girls were humming.

They were walking to a very, very dark, quiet, out-of-the-way place.

Before long, they reached the foot of the Western Mountain where there was no one within a few miles. They were already prepared for a long journey.

“It looks good here.”

“Okay everyone, get ready.”

Weed carefully dug up the soil and planted the seed in it. Then, he watered it a little.

It showed no reaction for a while, but the soil that blanketed the seed soon began to turn red.

Quake

RUMBLE

“Kyaaa!” Surka cried in alarm.

A great earthquake shook the ground!

The seismic center lay where Weed had sowed the seed. The earth split into two, and a thick trunk shot up into the sky.

Thirty feet, sixty feet...

In the blink of an eye, a topless pillar stood before Weed’s party. Yet the trunk kept on growing.

Watching the trunk rise above the clouds, Weed said, “The City of Heaven must be up there. I think this vine will guide us to it.”

“Then...”

“Now we’ve come all the way here, why shrink away? Hold on to this fast. Or we might end up climbing the vine from halfway.”

“Shoot! I don’t want to do that.”

Weed took out a rope from his backpack and tied his teammates to him.

“Together we live, together we die.”

“Yeah!” they cheered.

Weed and Pale decided to hang on to the vine first.

This was so that even if Irene or Romuna, the least muscular, lost their grip, the men up on the vine could prevent them from all falling from the sky.

Weed and his teammates clung on to the trunk sprouting from the seed of the Heavenly Tree.

Then they shot up into the sky.

Chapter 4: City Of Heaven, Lavias

Dr. Cha Eunhee from the Great Society Rehabilitation Centre was a world famous psychologist, who had patented a novel method of therapy for the treatment of psychological illnesses. Her relentless work schedule usually left her no time for rest.

She had a constant barrage of patients to attend to and weekly journal articles to submit in a never-ending cycle of monotony.

“Boring. Dull. Tedious.” These were her daily complaints. But despite her desire to escape it all, she simply could not bring herself to just abandon her responsibilities.

Hence, she now found herself in the midst of a counseling session with a middle-aged woman.

“I’m truly sorry about your daughter’s circumstances,” Dr. Cha said, blinking away the moisture in her eyes.

“I know it’s already been 5 years.” The woman smiled sorrowfully as she confided in Dr. Cha.

“But ever since that child tried to throw her life away, I haven’t been able to concentrate on anything.”

“It’s time for you to tear your thoughts away from your daughter’s well-being and begin searching for your own purpose in

life.”

“Actually doctor...” the woman asked, grasping Dr. Cha’s hand tightly.

“... I believe that she’s trapped in there somewhere... She’s...”

*

The Heavenly Tree randomly extended skyward but soon began shooting towards a specific direction.

Weed and his companions held fast onto the trunk as it sprouted towards its target at some speed. The buffeting wind left them battered and the ground below was a distant memory. Within seconds, Baran village had disappeared from sight.

They passed through the clouds and arrived at a seemingly huge island. An island floating in the sky! Riding the growing tree stalk of the Heavenly Tree, Weed and his companions rose above the fog blurring the area.

“This is the City of Heaven!” the party exclaimed, feasting their eyes on their surroundings.

A maze of buildings sprawled out before them. In the center of the extensive labyrinth rose a massive tower with a myriad of birds perched on top of it. Beyond the large tower were rolling hills and lush fields.

“Oh! The tree’s withering away!” shouted Irene as she glanced back at the tree.

The Heavenly Tree’s trunk withered and splintered before their eyes. The fragments disappeared into the clouds, severing the floating island from the distant ground below.

“Our way back has been destroyed. What do we do now?” Surka fretted. Her companions, on the other hand, did not seem particularly concerned.

“The real adventure starts here. Since the tree is gone, we’ll worry about returning when the time comes.” said Pale.

“But, Pale-nim...” Surka was on the verge of tears, already missing the solid ground.

Weed attempted to cheer her up, “If there’s a will, there’s a way.” But Surka seemed unconvinced by Weed’s words of encouragement, at which point Weed nonchalantly said, “Well, if we can’t find a way we can always jump right?”

“B-but...”

“Well, you’d surely die once, but you’d definitely end up on the ground.”

Surka's face went white. Truth be told, she had always been terrified of heights.

As the Heavenly Tree grew, she had held on for dear life, afraid of plummeting to her death.

Perhaps she would have passed up on this adventure if she had known it would take her all the way up here.

The party continued on, consoling Surka along the way.

*

The City of Heavens was home to a unique species.

“They look like birds...”

Standing on two legs, with their small beady eyes, pointed beak, great wingspan, and rounded cheeks, they resembled sparrows.

The old birds seemed to have white beards around their beak. “Kyaa! So cute!” Surka exclaimed, her affection for the birds overshadowing her acrophobia. She was no longer trembling in fear, but excitement.

The old bird slowly walked towards the group, ignoring Surka's unwelcomed affections.

“Greetings travelers, welcome to Lavias.”

The whole party shifted their gaze to Weed.

Based on previous experiences, Weed was deemed to be best suited to lead.

Furthermore, it had become clear to the party that Weed’s every move was calculated, since he was the type to sweet-talk any NPC into giving him what he wanted.

“Thank you. We’ve endured a perilous journey from distant lands before setting our weary feet on this beautiful place. But in the face of such unimaginable splendor, our fatigue has all but dissipated. Is this place Lavias?”

“Indeed! Our city is home to the noble and dignified Avians. Only here will you find the sun so brilliant, and the air so fresh!” The white-bearded bird gushed with pride as he shook his wings. Even his feathers quivered with excitement at the praise.

“The air here is indeed the freshest and the sunlight most impressive. No doubt the passing clouds paint a beautiful picture. But what are the specialties here in Lavias?”

Weed jumped at the chance to learn about the city’s specialties. If there were items exclusively found in Lavias, he would make a lot of money by purchasing them in bulk and reselling in Rosenheim Kingdom.

“We are not on familiar terms yet to permit you to ask such an impertinent question. You need to get better acquainted with me. It would help if you could bring me some delicious treats. In fact, I would like that very much.”

The bearded bird flapped his wings and hobbled away from them.

Weed tried to chase after the bird but soon gave up and returned to his party.

“Okay, let’s split up to explore the city from here on.”

If all five of them explored the city together, it would have been too time-consuming.

Therefore, they decided to split up in order to cover more ground.

“The city seems to be safe since there are no hostile zones.”

“Still, Laviias seems to be too big a city to explore alone. Let’s all meet back here in 2 hours.”

“If you come across a good quest during your exploration, just come back for the time being, and share it with the rest of the party. We’ll decide together as to which quest is best. Now, let’s

get started.”

“Okay, got it.”

And thus they set off to explore the city.

To begin with, Weed proceeded towards the bustling city center to see if there were any shops.

Merchants were waddling like ducks through the streets, hawking their wares to the pedestrians.

As the name suggested, the residents of Avian City possessed traits common to birds and chubby torsos and stumpy legs were the norm, their heads ranged from those of owls to hawks.

‘To think there’s a city like this, amazing...’ Weed thought.

Opening a chicken restaurant here would definitely be the wrong move here, since the locals could misinterpret it to be cannibalism.

Unlike human cities, carriages did not exist since the birds themselves were big enough to carry the horses. If the roads were blocked, all they had to do was spread their wings and fly away.

From all the stares he received, Weed felt like a monkey in the zoo as he walked amongst the Avians.

Weed entered a weapons store.

“Good day.” Weed said as he entered.

“Ah! A human traveler! Is there something you need?”

“There are many things I need. However, I’m not familiar with the items on display. I’d like a closer look.”

“As you wish”

Weed inspected some of the items.

Ting

Item: Baravo’s Steel Beak:

Durability: 90/90

Damage: 21-23

Equipped:

Ability to grasp food items that grant bonuses.

The long length makes it easy to reach buried worms.

Price: 100 gold

Weed sighed and turned his attention to a different item.

Ting

Item: Silver Pitchfork of Saigon:

Durability: 30/30

Damage: 17-19

Part of a set. Low durability since it is made out of silver.

Good for snatching the heads of the undead while flying low.

Price: 70 gold

Ting

Item: Feathers of the Goddess:

Durability: 15/15

Restriction:

Females only

Effect: Enchantment.

The brilliant and sparkling multi-colored feathers grant relief from enemy attacks when equipped.

Light enough that you can't even feel it. Allows for unrivaled gliding, guaranteed to prevent a fall.

Price: 45 gold

The items ranged from pitchforks and telescopes to peculiar, hollow weapons that were conical and tapered towards the tip. These seemed to be the Avians' weapon of choice.

"Do you have any weapons suitable for humans?" Weed asked the shopkeeper, who greatly resembled a badger.

"Of course I do! Just wait a moment. Since human customers are so rare, I had to put them in the warehouse."

As Weed waited, he felt intense stares from outside.

One by one, the passing Avians stopped in their tracks to again

watch Weed like an escaped monkey from a zoo.

“I hear this guy is a human!”

“How odd. Must be difficult to eat with a flat beak”

“Look at that. No feathers, either. He must freeze during the winter, the poor thing.”

No normal bird could ever enjoy the cold. From their perspective, Weed seemed like he would easily freeze to death.

An Avian in Rosenheim, or any city in the Continent below, would draw a staring crowd as well. But in Lavias, the Avian City, Weed the human was the spectacle.

“Here are the things you asked for.”

The shop owner set out some armor, a shield, two hammers and five different blades. Weed had no use for the shield, so he immediately moved on to the blades and armor. After all, he only had 70 gold from selling the items looted from the Lizardmen.

Ting

Item: Clay Sword:

Durability: 90/90

Damage: 23-25

A magic sword imbued with the spirit of ice.

Does 2~5 bonus damage to armored target and decreases movement.

Restriction:

Level 60

STR 200

Equiped:

Grants additional 2-5 Ice Elemental damage.

Price: 188 gold

Ting

Item: Sword of the Dusk Wraith:

Durability: 200/200

Damage: 14-15

Work of the Dwarf Theodore. Forged from steel mined from the Forest of Death.

Lowers vitality, has small chance of dealing triple damage on a critical hit.

Status effect: Cursed Item

Restriction:

Level 70

STR 250

Equipped:

Rare chance of dealing a deadly attack.

Price: 160 gold.

Weed stopped browsing at that point and shook his head.

The prices were ridiculously exorbitant but it was not completely unexpected since this was an Avian city after all. Even though the Clay Sword and the Sword of the Dusk Wraith were evidently rare items, they would only sell for half the price at the Citadel of Serabourg.

“I don’t have enough money right now, so I won’t be buying anything.”

“In that case, come back again, except these might already be sold, so you better earn money as quickly as you can,” said the badger-like shop owner, sounding disappointed.

Weed’s party was the only human travelers here, and for the most part, doing business was his main focus.

Weed left the shop and slowly made his way to the east side of the city.

Beyond the city’s periphery lay an endless expanse of fields and patches of nothingness here and there.

“Chirp Chirp!”

“Cheep!”

“Tweet tweet!”

Cute Avian children were singing, perched on top of clotheslines. Amongst them the yellow chicks were particularly adorable.

“Hiya?” Weed said to them, walking over to look. But they merely giggled and gave no other response.

“Good day.” Weed greeted every Avian he came across.

One of the Avians, who had been in front of the weapons store, excitedly asked him, “You’re a traveler I haven’t seen before. Are you part of the strong group from the land below?”

“I am not strong yet. Though I love peace and admire the sky, I also respect the military arts. For strength is required to ensure peace.”

“I feel the same way. I happen to have a request that you may be able to fulfill. Truthfully, Lavias isn’t as peaceful as it seems. This is an ancient land and there are great evils lying underground, gathering their powers to destroy us. Will you help me?”

Ting

Quest: The Undead of Lavias

Undead lurk in the depths of the City of Heaven, Lavias.

The Avian residents cannot sleep for the nightly wailing of the undead.

If you return after killing at least 30 Skeleton Soldiers in the Underground Passage, good things may happen.

Difficulty Level: D

Quest requirements:

Failure will decrease friendship level with Crows.

Reward:

Unknown

Weed and his party had not expected the City of Heaven to be more than a regular, undiscovered city and had only hoped to buy or attain unique items that could not be found in the Citadel of Serabourg.

They had assumed that a quest related to the Rosenheim Kingdom was the best they could get.

Surprisingly, there were hunting grounds in the City of Heaven. Not to mention, it was a rare undead hunting ground. Skeleton Soldiers were known to be around level 80 or so.

Weed thought for a second, and shook his head.

“I understand that defeating the undead is my quest, but I am here with companions. I will return once I’ve consulted them.”

Weed continued touring the area and spoke to Avians he passed.

For some, it was their first time seeing a human traveler and so they made certain requests. They were mostly related to the undead that plagued the region.

Through various conversations with the inhabitants of the city,

Weed gathered information about the underground areas in and around Lavias and the paths leading there. However, the place was practically a war zone. The majority of its inhabitants were skeletons, as well as Death Knights, Demonic Wardens, Dullahans, Liches, Specters and Shades.

Dullahans were powerful and exhaustive undead, who carried their own heads. Not only were they around level 140, they were fast and had excellent combat ability, making them very difficult to defeat.

Liches specialized in black magic and due to their high intelligence, they were known to flee if they found themselves in danger.

Needless to say, the Death Knights were the harbingers of death. They rode on horseback just like the Ringwraiths from the movie, *The Lord of the Rings*. They were the stuff of nightmares! In terms of level, they were nearly 200!

To think that such powerful undead were residing underground, Weed's heart began to race.

‘Ah, lovely EXP.’ he thought with a wolfish grin on his face.

While wandering through the city, Weed discovered a large signboard. In large letters, it read “Beginner's Class Training”. Weed entered as if driven by some mystical force.

“Welcome. I see you are a human,” greeted the Instructor, who looked just like a rooster. His hair, which resembled a rooster’s comb, was particularly noticeable.

“I was just passing by and wished to offer my greetings. I’ve completed the Beginners Class Training in Rosenheim Kingdom.”

All Instructors in Training Halls had high regard for those who respected the military arts and despised evil. Completing training also gave some reputation. Weed had entered the Training Hall expecting to build an instant rapport with the Instructor and gain some useful information. But the reaction he received fell far from his expectations.

“Mmph?” The Avian Instructor smothered a laugh. His eyes showed his amusement even as his beak remained still.

“That can’t be. It’s hardly possible for you to have completed the Beginner Class Training. You don’t have that look about you.”

“Huh? But I have completed the Beginner Class Training at the Citadel of Serabourg.”

“They only have a Basic Training Hall there.” Weed’s eyes lit up with the flames of desire.

‘Basic Training Hall! So then this place is the next phase!’ he thought excitedly.

“Can I attempt the Beginner’s Training once?”

“Looks like it. Those who completed Basic Training are eligible. However, this here is different from your Basic Training Hall. There’s a high possibility of danger so don’t push yourself.”

“I want to try it.” Weed said eagerly

“You mean the Training?”

“That’s what I said.”

“Your spirit is admirable. Well then, follow me.”

Weed followed the instructor accordingly.

He led Weed to a structure at the rear of the training hall. Its entrance was a yawning, pitch-black, beak, within which lay a dark passageway.

“All you need to do is go through this passageway and exit safe and sound on the opposite end. It’s simple right? However, your combat skills will be unavailable. And a word of advice, don’t light a fire, that would make it too easy, no, too convenient.”

“Understood” Weed’s response was brief. With long strides, he entered into the passage.

At first, there was nothing that could dismay Weed. However, as he progressed through the passage, his resolution slowly began to fade.

He began using his hands and feet to blindly feel his way through the passage. He did not know what could emerge from the eerily calm passage. It was then...

PYIING!

Weed reflexively ducked his head under the onslaught of slashes. As strands of hair flew off, he realized that the calm was now over.

‘An attack? Great’ His body moved as soon as this registered.

Weed had already drawn his sword and thrust it forward. Though he could not see, he could sense something approaching.

CLANG!

The Iron Sword clashed against something metallic. Judging by the impact, the blow was neither blocked by a shield nor parried. The enemy’s body had felt as hard as stone!

‘From the right!’ Weed sensed the attack coming just as it sliced through the air. Now he was certain that the next one would also come from the right. Since he could not see, he had no choice but to rely on his other senses. Weed had faith in his instincts.

At that moment Weed's sword moved as if it had a mind of its own. It smoothly swung to deflect the oncoming attack in the pitch darkness. Someone who had no real life experience with a sword would never be able to do this.

'Ten, maybe more!' thought Weed.

The relentless attacks gave him no respite.

"Yatz!" Weed shouted a battle-cry as he launched into the air. As he rolled onto the ground, he firmly held the sword sideways, aiming to slash at the ankles. Sparks flew as his sword scraped against something made of iron. In that instant, the area was briefly illuminated.

There were dozens of Barbarians clad completely in steel. They held swords, batons, sledgehammers, axes, clubs, hammers, and maces.

'Well crap!'

A chill ran up Weed's spine as his burning will was snuffed out like a candle in the wind. But attacks from the Steel Barbarians were not over.

He was able to parry several more of the attacks, but in the lightless passage it was impossible to deal with all the attacks at once. A blow landed on his back, smashing him into the ground.

The Barbarians descended upon him from all directions like hyena's.

*

“You failed.” Hearing the Instructor's voice, Weed slowly sat up. His whole body felt sore.

‘What is this place?’ He thought as he looked about. He quickly noticed he was back at the entrance to the Training Hall. The Instructor must have carried him back here. His health bar had decreased. He had been attacked to the point that his HP was now less than 30; even a light tap could kill him. Fortunately, he wasn't bleeding, so his HP was no longer decreasing.

“This is what happens when those without sufficient skill challenge this place. I saved you this time, but if you try again, you'll die.”

Weed shook his head to regain his wits and asked, “Do I need to be at a higher level in order to succeed?”

“That's not it. The Infinite Steel Men adjust to the challenger's level.”

“Then that means my true skills aren't up to par.”

“Apparently so”

“How long has it been since I entered?”

“About 4 hours.”

“My companions must all be waiting for me. I’ll be sure to come back again.” Weed promised and left the Training Hall and proceeded to the designated meeting place.

*

Weed ran quickly! At the rendezvous point, he found the rest of the party, their faces glowing with excitement.

“I’m sorry I’m late...” he said apologetically.

“Weed-nim!” Surka exclaimed, quickly running up to him.

“We’ve found a great quest!”

“We were waiting for you to return, Weed-nim, so we could all decide if we should take it.”

While Weed was gone, the rest of the party had zealously explored Lavias in order to gather as much information as possible.

First, how to get back to the ground below. The Feathers of

Lightness, sold at the supermarket, would slow the descent of any falling object. Using the feather to leap off of Lavias might be exhilarating for Weed, but it would be a terrifying experience for someone with acrophobia like Surka.

The second was the slightly disappointing news that Weed's party was not the first to discover Lavias. They had been expecting it to some extent since their fame had not increased when they first set foot on the City of Heaven.

Next were the quests!

Irene had found a quest to slay 20 Skeleton Knights. The reward was a Ring that increases Mana regeneration rate by 10%.

Skeleton Knights were, of course, tough opponents to face with their levels ranging in the 100s. But the party was bewitched by the reward. After all, a ring that increased Mana regeneration rate was very rare. Its value in any of the big cities of the Versailles Continent was priceless!

“Where is the place?” Weed asked, also amazed by the reward.

Just like that, they accepted the quest to slay Skeleton Knights.

Ting

New Dungeon: You are the very first players to discover Memphis Hall:

Benefits:

Fame increased by 200 (+200 FAME).

Double experience and 2x normal item drop rate.

The first monster killed will drop the best quality item it can drop.

The words floated in a message window the instant Weed and his companions entered the underground passage. They immediately froze on the spot.

“This is...”

“We’re the first visitors!” Surka and Romuna exclaimed joyfully.

Pale had a large grin on his face as well. Hunting grounds that grant double EXP were worth entering, no matter how dangerous they were. It was a waste to leave and lose all that potential EXP.

‘Others may have come to Lavias first, but they didn’t come to this hunting ground. No, perhaps they weren’t able to discover it. Let’s not get our hopes too high.’ Weed thought.

Weed tried very hard to maintain his composure, but his excitement was undeniable.

“For the time being, let’s take our time looking around. Our primary goal is to defeat the Skeleton Knights, however, since we need to know if we can even do that, we should hunt everything we pass first. Irene-nim”

“Yes!”

“Please take care of us, especially with your healing.”

“Yeah, and since this place is infested with the undead, I will definitely provide my Blessings as well.”

Priestly Blessings and Holy Magic were fatal to the undead. The Blessings served to increase damage by 1.5 times against different enemies, and inflicted additional damage if the opponents were undead.

“Let’s go.”

Everyone in Weed’s party got every available buff, increasing their Strength and Vitality. Defensive buffs were focused mainly on Weed and Surka. They then began moving out.

“Hu...man? There...are liv-living humans.” Four to five skeletons had gathered in the underground passage.

The small, diverse group of undead consisted of two Skeleton Mages, one Skeleton Soldier and a Skeleton Archer.

“Hu...man.” The Skeleton’s empty eye sockets flashed. A murderous red aura exploded as they ran toward the party, their bones rattling as they jostled in time to their movements.

“Get ready to fight.”

CLANG

Weed was the first to spring forward, blocking the Skeleton Soldier’s sword. Instead of stopping at a simple block, Weed smoothly parried the attack aside and dealt a counterattack.

It was not an in-game skill. Weed had naturally executed the art of sword fighting by using appropriate movements of the wrist.

“Triple!”

POP SNAP CRACK

He dealt three consecutive attacks. By nature, Triple was a very difficult skill to follow with the eyes. It thrust forward, then

slashed diagonally, and as the sword draws back it utilized the entire body's momentum to slash once more in a continuous attack! Mastery of the skill gave the potential for additional slash attacks, but even then, it would still be called Triple since the name was derived from the three original attacks.

In the midst of the intense melee, Weed executed the skill without shouting 'Triple'.

Even a split second could determine the difference between life and death. Especially if one was capable of utilizing that moment to aim for the enemy's weaknesses.

If all three continuous strikes were somehow blocked, there could be a chance for a fourth slash to be executed. In case this was deflected too, there was always the minute possibility for an impressive fifth.

'Triple' was originally meant to be three swift slashes, which took advantage of the enemy's weaknesses to deliver a successful attack. On top of this, Weed was able to maneuver his sword using his innate abilities to create openings in his opponent's defense. Unsurprisingly, the Skeleton Soldier's ribs completely shattered under the onslaught of Weed's sword.

Only someone like Weed could think to use such an overpowered and cruel method to kill his enemies.

At that point, the Skeleton Mages in the rear began chanting spells aimed at Weed. However, Romuna's spell was the first to be

cast.

“Fire Strike!”

Due to her high proficiency in using this skill, six fireballs were fired in succession at the Skeleton Mages. This served to interrupt and effectively cancel the spells that they were about to cast.

“You’re mine!”

Pale was focused on the lone Skeleton Archer. The two were furiously firing arrows at each other.

“Eat this! Blessed Arrow!” Pale let loose an arrow which emitted a blinding flash of light.

By nature, the undead hated light, and skeletons such as these were particularly weak to it. Higher level undead, however, could walk around in broad daylight without any issues.

Pale’s arrows lodged themselves into the Skeleton and shone brilliantly.

Meanwhile, Surka delivered punches to the Skeleton Mages at close range with Romuna supporting her. Since this was their first time fighting a formidable opponent, they were all putting their lives on the line.

Weed only had to deal with the Skeleton Soldier.

“Dieeee...”

The bones of the Skeleton Soldier rattled as it leaped into the air and executed a powerful strike as it descended. Although its sword was riddled with chips and cracks, the strength behind the strike was too great to ignore.

‘Even so, the moves are too obvious.’

Weed activated a skill.

“Backstab!”

By the time the skeleton’s sword reached its target, only Weed’s afterimage remained. Weed, who was already behind his enemy, sliced into the Skeleton’s neck.

Ting

CRITICAL HIT!

A critical Hit!

Such precise timing was required that even a thousandth of a second mattered in the delivery of a successful critical hit.

However, aiming for one had its own risks, therefore, succeeding in it was all the more satisfying.

Having sustained damage from both Triple and Backstab, the Skeleton's bones fell apart into a lifeless heap.

“Weed-nim, over here!” Surka cried, fatigue evident in her voice.

Fighting two Skeleton Mages was too much for her, and she was gradually losing ground.

As a monk, she had high Agility so her movements should have been quite fast. But at the moment this was not the case.

Ting

You have been poisoned!

You have been cursed!

Strength Decrease

Agiltly Decrease

Both resulted from poisoned wounds and curses that had left her bleeding continuously. Suffering from the Skeleton Mages' curses, Surka was engulfed in dark smoke. The curses were both stronger and faster than Irene's Cleanse spell.

“.....”

Weed hastily rushed over to save her.

“Sculpting Blade!” he yelled as he charged into the melee.

Each time Weed recovered enough mana to utilize the Sculpting Blade skill, a Skeleton Mage with low health disappeared with a flash of grey. They were dying faster than expected since Romuna had bombarded them with spells till all her mana had ran out. The remaining Skeleton Archer was quickly finished off by a well-timed combo from Pale and Romuna, who had since recovered her mana.

“Wow! We won!” Surka let out a cry of joy as soon as the battle was over.

“Even our levels rose,” Pale said, grinning.

The level 80 Skeletons, who were more than 15 levels higher, coupled with the doubled EXP gain, gave an incredible amount of EXP to the party. They were already close to leveling up just from killing a single group.

Having used all their mana on removing the curses and healing, Romuna and Irene sat down to recover mana through Meditation.

Meditation doubled the speed of mana recovery. Unfortunately, it was a skill exclusive to Mage and Priest classes, meaning Weed couldn't learn it.

“Shall we see what items we got?”

Normally they would just grab whatever they wanted, but this time, just one battle had felt as if they had been walking on thin ice. So the party gathered around the items the skeletons had dropped.

Ting

Item: Worn Bloodstained Gloves:

Durability: 7/40

Defense: 6

An item filled with the hatred and desire of the dead.

Although they strengthen the wearer, they seem to be best avoided.

Restrictions:

Level 50

Strength 100

Equipped:

Raises Strength by 20

Raises Attack Power by 10%

Lowers Health by -200

Ting

Item: Boots of the Cold Ones:

Durability: 9/50

Defense: 5

Shoes made to resist the embrace of the earth.

Since they are made from the hide of water buffaloes, they give great feeling when worn.

Restrictions:

Level 60

Equipped:

Raises Ice Magic Resistance by 15%

Items like these were not bad at all. They could be sold to the merchants, but wearing them was much better. The gloves might lower health but the defense was high enough that wearing them was worthwhile.

At the moment, as part of the effect of discovering the dungeon,

the item drop rates were doubled and the best items had not even been identified. So Weed and his party walked towards the sword dropped by the Skeleton Soldier.

Ting

Item: Clay Sword:

Durability: 12/65

Attack: 23-25

A magic sword imbued with the spirit of ice.

Does 2-5 bonus damage to armored target and decreases movement.

Restrictions:

Level 60

STR 200

Equipped:

Grants an additional 2-5 Ice Elemental damage.

A grin spread across Weed's face.

‘Jackpot!’

A sword that in the store sold for over 100 gold was also attainable as an item drop. Of course, compared to a Clay Sword purchased at a store, the item drop was much lower in durability. In addition, the maximum durability of the sword would decrease little by little if the sword breaks and remains in an unrepaired state.

“This is...”

Pale looked over the items for a while.

He felt greed sinking in. He was human after all, so why shouldn't he feel it? However, Weed slowly walked to the center of the group. All he wore was a simple, hardened leather outfit. Neither armor nor boots. Weed spoke, addressing Pale.

“That bastard's attack power was really something. If there were two of them, they might have been trouble.”

“.....”

Pale bit back tears as he stood aside, allowing Weed to claim all three items. If Weed, their meat shield, did not have good equipment then who would replace him?

“These kinds of items should belong to Pale-nim...” said Weed’s using his ‘disappointed voice’.

“.....”

“Still, as I’m the one who has to fight them directly, it would be a bonus to be well-equipped. But the next item drops should definitely go to Surka-nim and Pale-nim.” This was classic example of ‘giving the disease and then offering the remedy’.

Weed was the one who would benefit most from the items, so this could be called a group decision. Weed would finally be free of the Hard Iron Sword that he’d received from the Training Hall Instructor. Suddenly, a voice called out.

“Humans... the beloved soldiers of the undead...”

A ‘le-wild’ Skeleton Knight had appeared without warning.

Everyone makes mistakes, but this one was potentially fatal. Until now, the enemies in the hunting grounds they had explored stayed mostly within their designated territories. Skeleton Knights, on the other hand, wandered wherever the hell they

pleased. Oblivious to this fact, the party had been resting without a worry when it suddenly appeared.

A Skeleton Knight, with its eerie, glowing eyes, wearing scale mail over its body of bones, was an undead monster over level 100. This formidable creature now charged at the party.

“Kyaa!”

The Skeleton Knight swung its sword in a wide arc, cutting Surka’s hip. Fortunately, she did not die, but her health dropped by over 35%!

“Run!”

Weed leapt in between Surka and the Skeleton Knight, holding the Clay Sword he had just picked up. His quick thinking was a great help in the midst of such a crisis.

A monster of over level 100!

Weed’s knees began to shake. But not for fear of his enemy since he considered anyone within 30 levels of him a fair fight. Weed’s concern was for the Clay Sword with its pitiful durability. If it were to break during this fight... Unfortunately, nobody could swap weapons with an enemy right before their eyes.

‘Please, God... don’t break my new weapon!’ Weed prayed.

“Be careful, Weed-nim!”

“Romuna, Irene, wake up! A Skeleton Knight appeared!”

The party members quickly got ready for combat. However, that gave the Skeleton Knight enough time to begin its first attack: A powerful charge followed by another attack! For the first time, Weed felt that his brittle sword was needed.

‘I can’t lose this sword!’

It was already too late to run, but Weed trusted his movements and defense. Rather than blocking, he attempted to dodge. A minor injury was unavoidable, but he felt that a flesh wound was a worthwhile sacrifice to protect his fragile bone... of course, the “bone” this time was obviously his new sword.

‘Wait, did I repair the gloves and boots?’

‘Crap!’ The durability of the gloves and boots were nearly depleted.

A weapon like the Clay Sword would not lose much durability unless it made physical contact, but other equipment, like the gloves and boots, lose durability simply if the wearer is hit by an attack. Durability was a strange attribute; when near maximum, it would decrease slowly, but when low, a single attack could be enough to break the item.

‘Why now...’ Weed thought bitterly.

Weed quickly rolled on the ground.

Clank!

The sword of the Skeleton Knight swung down, just barely missing him.

Such skills oftentimes appeared in martial arts novels. This one in particular involved rolling on the ground in an attempt to evade attacks. What about pride? Something like that had no place in this situation.

The thought of his gloves, boots and new sword breaking was much more painful. While Weed was stalling, his party finished their battle preparations: Pale sent arrows flying, while Irene cast Divine Protection and Blessings. Romuna cast powerful spells, not hesitating to start off with the strongest ones.

“Fire Field!”

In order to catch the fast-moving Skeleton Knight, she used an area-of-effect spell.

VOOOSH!

Flames began to spread from the spot where the Skeleton Knight stood. Weed and Surka had to move quickly to escape the fire. In that spare moment, Weed put away the Clay Sword, boots and gloves and equipped the Iron Sword. He wished he could use the Repair skill on them, but the dire situation only allowed him enough time to unequipped the item.

“I doubt it’d die from just this,” said Romuna confidently. Fire Field simultaneously dealt heavy damage to a large number of enemies. Besides Weed’s sword skills, the biggest source of power in the party was Romuna’s Fire Mastery.

Out of all the skills that improve the power of fire spells and effects, Fire Mastery was the 8th most effective. Nevertheless, nobody believed that this was enough to kill an enemy over level 100 like the Skeleton Knight.

Soon the flames dissipated, revealing the Skeleton Knight still standing where it had been before. Its blade was glowing red-hot, and fire poured from its empty eye sockets and ribs, giving it the appearance of a Flaming Skeleton Knight. Though it had taken quite a bit of damage, it was still very much alive.

“These... humans...”

The Skeleton Knight ran forward to attack. Weed confronted the creature, confident this time. He had nothing to fear now that he was using the Iron Sword instead of the Clay Sword.

“Sculpting Blade!”

Weed's sword danced gracefully as it tore into the Skeleton Knight. Romuna's magic, Surka's fists and Pale's arrows also hit their mark in quick succession.

“Grr....”

The Skeleton Knight was still going strong, and the fight began to take a dangerous turn. Weed's mana had still not fully recovered since the last battle; so he couldn't even execute a simple sword skill. So far, Weed had dodged the Skeleton Knight's attacks with just his nimble movements, but had not been able to deal any significant damage. The other party members were in similar situations. Having spent all their mana, they were just barely surviving. Within minutes, the situation got worse.

“I'm completely out of mana. I'm afraid I can't heal anymore... I'm sorry.” Irene's words drove everyone to despair. Though Weed and Surka could still fight, once they died, the others would be sitting ducks.

‘In that case...’ Weed decided to use the most powerful finishing move he knew.

“Sword Kaiser!”

Sword Kaiser is the Imperial Formless Sword Techniques' final form. However, this was just a nickname that Weed had created. He would have to wait and see if it was powerful enough to truly deserve the title “Kaiser of Swords.”

Nnnng...

Thin blue lines of light began to emit from the Iron Sword and surround Weed's body. Weed instantly drew the Skeleton Knight's full attention, however, its focus was the Iron Sword itself, which seemed to have grown big enough to reach the sky.

Shoom!

The sword compressed the air gathering an explosive power. As Weed prepared to stab, most of Weed's sword skills usually involved slashing. Stabs, on the other hand, were more powerful, but had their own set of problems. If the stab missed, there was a huge risk of leaving an opening for an attack.

However, swinging is added weight to the blade, subtly changing the balance between the wielder's waist, wrist and footsteps. Weed knew how to use this change to his advantage to dodge enemy attacks, and counter them by integrating offense and defense.

This was how Weed managed to fight stronger monsters, despite having lower health and defense compared to other players. If not for this strategy, even the fight against the Skeleton Soldiers would have been a flatout struggle.

Even though it was only a step or two away, Weed could feel all his health and mana draining out of his body and flowing into the tip of his sword. The Skeleton Knight's jaw dropped in awe of Weed's power.

‘Done!’

Just that momentary glimpse of this skill's power was enough to satisfy Weed. However, even before the attack hit the Skeleton Knight, Weed felt the shock of the impact.

Boom!

Dirt and dust flew everywhere along with the deafening sound of an explosion.

Soon the dust cleared only to reveal Weed still standing his ground, battered and bruised.

‘How’s this possible?’ his mind said in shock.

Sword Kaiser was a monstrous skill that consumed 2000 mana. If there was not enough mana, the difference was paid in health points. Executing it had left Weed with less than 50 HP.

“Wh-where is it?”

Weed began heading towards the Skeleton Knight.

Skeleton Knight!

The Iron Sword was jammed into its abdomen. Cracks spread from that spot until the entire body fell to pieces. In no time at all, the party rushed over to see Weeds handy work.

“We worked so hard to beat this guy...”

Surka lowered her head, exhausted. They went through so much to defeat the Skeleton Knight, but the bastard only dropped some Iron Ore, a few silvers and a single Bone. Though the party had risked their lives on plenty of occasions, the first time for anything was always the hardest. Not to mention they had entered this fight in poor conditions.

Just like Weed, everyone had fought while being nearly out of mana. From then on, Romuna cast her ‘alarm’ spell when fighting skeletons, to check if a Skeleton Knight was approaching. When they were in decent condition, they would fight it. If not, they would avoid it.

In another dungeon or cave, they may have felt pressure to fight in unfavorable conditions due to competition for kills. But luckily, Weed and his party were the only players in this dungeon.

This, however, meant danger, because there was a surplus of monsters!

It was these kinds of situations that Weed liked best.

The moment they entered the dungeon, the unique ability of

Moonlight Sculptors had been activated. In the sunlight, Weed's skills were not at their fullest. However, in the darkness of the night, or in the shadowy depths of a dungeons, the true power of his class manifested, by further increasing his base abilities by about 30%.

In addition, Weed had already read the Skeleton Knights' fighting patterns using his innate combat ability. The bastards were no longer that much of a threat now that he knew exactly when to dodge. This knowledge alone halved the damage he took. Pale and Surka had Romuna's support, as well as Irene's Bless spell, therefore, solo Skeleton Knights could do nothing but quietly hand over their bones and disappear.

"Hahaha." Weed chuckled.

Weed grinned as he watched the skeletons walking about. He could not help but smile since all he could see was potential EXP points and items!

"Kekeke."

"Hehe"

"Hahaha."

The whole party began to laugh.

To think that the sight of walking skeletons could make them so

happy! The swords that the Skeleton Soldiers carried, though not all Clay Swords, could be sold at a better price than the Iron Sword. One just had to repair it and then sell it for instant money. It was a fantastic hunting ground since the drops included shields, gloves and sometimes even breastplates. And since the drop rate was doubled, it was no surprise that Weed's inventory was soon full. Soloing Skeleton Knights, despite their high level, were no longer a concern to Weed and his party. However, Death Knights, which sometimes wandered past, were their biggest concern.

“Hu...man. A... human's... scent... from here...”

A Death Knight, clad in dark grey armor, appeared on horseback. Weed and his party, who had just been killing skeletons and looting items, nervously hid behind a stone.

No matter what they did, there was no way they could defeat a Death Knight, known to be over level 200. The difference in levels was so great that their attacks would be considered misses even if they hit their mark.

In Royal Road, not only users, but NPCs as well, could grow stronger. A Death Knight that reached its second advancement had formidable set of skills.

This Death Knight, called Royan, had dark energy pouring out of his helm. Death Knights were named monsters and so each of them had a name of their own.

“The... scent... of a human... Oh... I... don't have a nose.”

Death Knight Royan looked around for a bit, then slowly left to search a different area. Even after the Death Knight left, the sound of its horse's hoof beats could be heard for some time.

“Whew.”

“It's gone.”

Weed and his party breathed a sigh of relief. Nothing else could strike as much fear into them as the presence of the roaming Death Knights that sometimes came around.

Chapter 5: The One Who Does the Worst

Weed and his party members had managed to safely gather the Skeleton Knight bones from the first floor of Memphis Hall and complete their quest.

Unfortunately, there was some bad news as well. Apparently, Pale, Romuna and Irene were real life friends who lived in the same neighborhood. In fact, Surka was Romuna's younger sister.

They hadn't mentioned anything so as not to make Weed feel awkward. But now, they had to reveal the truth.

"Sorry... our parents..."

"It seems we won't be able to get online for a while." they said dejectedly.

They had already become addicted to Royal Road and played continuously to the point of even skipping school but their parents, who had been on vacation, soon found out.

Obviously, they were all grounded.

"You guys... are playing games instead of doing homework?!"

"GO TO SCHOOL RIGHT NOW!"

The log-in licenses to the expensive capsules were thus confiscated, and their requests for extended leave from school were cancelled. But luckily they had learnt their lesson from watching Weed that success depended on the ability to find profit even in an unfavorable situation! They simply made their parents log onto Royal Road asking them to just experience it for themselves.

A new player couldn't go outside the castle until four weeks had passed. Their parents, however, were completely satisfied with staying safely confined within the Castles walls.

After all, it was a perfect rendition of a fantasy world.

The parents had grown up playing games and reading fantasy novels themselves. But when they got jobs and started raising children, they were no longer able to do these things. This here, however, this was a whole new universe for them. The paradise they've been dreaming of since they were children.

This game is like a whole new world where they can escape from their work and business without going to faraway country.

“Games are not all that bad.”

“It's certainly fun.”

“By the way, Jungee's mom, I heard you got a ‘quest’ at the

Weapons Shop?”

“Yes, it’s really more of a chore. I have to buy five Whetstones for the shop...”

“Do you have enough money?”

“Yep. I got 3 silvers to buy them. Whetstones are 50 coppers, so I’ll be left with 50 coppers to spare.”

“Share with us!”

The parents started at Serabourg Castle all together. They wandered around together, doing quests and befriending the NPCs.

And just like that, the four in-game weeks went by, but in the real world only a week had passed. Now the parents were free to go in and out of the castle. When Pale and Surka had told them they could now leave the castle their parents just laughed.

“Come on... how can we hunt monsters?”

“Hunting is for you youngsters.”

“We like staying in the castle and helping people, doing chores for money, which we can then use to buy good food.”

But upon leaving the castle out of curiosity, the parents' attitudes changed dramatically. The following was the conversation that transpired between Romuna and her parents.

“Bastard Swords deal more damage than Long Swords... Why is that?”

“Because it's a two-handed sword. It's big and heavy, so you can't swing it as fast.”

“So you mean instead of several small hits, it's one strong hit?”

“Yep.”

“That's the kind of weapon I want... But the Bastard Sword costs over 10 gold from the shop...”

“Should I buy one for you?”

“Well... I'll only say this now... But how much do you think we went through raising you? When you were just a baby, we provided you the best food and covered you in the best clothes. Since we care so much about you, we don't really want to force you to...”

Pale's situation was quite similar. His parents were schoolteachers and thus they were very strict. When he was young, he could not so much as breathe loudly in front of his parents. His father, who had been an Army Ranger in his youth, had developed

significant charisma from his years in the military. On the night he left the castle for a short time, Pale had the following discussion with his father over dinner, “Hmm, it seems those damn foxes are very strong.”

“...?”

Pale, whose real name was Oh Dongman, was thinking hard to figure out what his father was saying.

His father hinted once again. “Damn foxes. They’re too strong.”

Only then did it occur to Oh Dongman.

“They’re a bit challenging at first. If you don’t have any equipment, that is.”

“I do have some...”

“You didn’t try to fight them on your own, did you?”

“I did...”

“Well of course it’s hard if you try to fight the foxes alone. At your level, Dad, it’s almost impossible”

“Th-then you mean you can beat them? Foxes?”

“Of course.”

Oh Dongman’s father grasped his son’s hands. “Avenge your father!” he commanded.

Needless to say, just like that, the parents were also sucked into the world of Royal Road. Since neighboring families were also playing the game together, Royal Road had become a hot topic at town meetings and family gatherings.

Now, instead of discussing real estate and finance pains, the parents chatted about Royal Road over drinks. Apparently, there were many people their age that played the game. They had, in fact, been late to discover the joy of Royal Road.

Hyun had long since predicted that a day like this would come. In most games, the value of items dropped over time. Same for currency like gold or silver. This was natural since the average levels of users rises over time. However, if the users are not confined to 10 to 20 year olds, and if adults who are set for life become addicted to Royal Road, the value of the game’s currency would not diminish.

When there was a great item, people started a bidding war. They bought weapons, armor and accessories the same way they bought good cars.

This actually had more merit than in the real world. If one went into battle wearing good equipment, then they could actually feel

themselves becoming stronger and taste the sweetness of victory.

As time went by, more middle-aged users appeared, buying items at increasingly high prices as if they were buying race cars. This was also how the parents were lured into playing Royal Road.

However, due to this, Pale and Co. were no longer able to train in Lavias.

“Sorry, but we have to help our parents. At least until they adjust to the game...”

Pale spoke without hiding his disappointment. Weed understood why they had to go. It was unavoidable since they were doing it for their parents. However, Weed still had things to do, so he stayed behind alone in Lavias.

*

“328,200 won spent on food this month. I heard the price of rice is increasing. But we should still avoid imported rice...”

Hyun was writing in his accounts ledger.

He did not want Hayan or his grandmother to eat American rice, which might be genetically modified. Regardless of how cheap it was, it just simply could not be trusted.

“We’ve been spending too much. I should stop using the recipes I had learnt online. Next is the heating... but there’s no way to save money on that because of grandma.”

Hyun checked all the expenses of the month. He had shopped for groceries, cooked food, cleaned the house and handled the money all on his own.

Only a meager 90 million won remained of his family’s entire fortune after the loan sharks had seized his 3 billion won. At one stage, his anger had led to many sleepless nights but in the end he was able to calm himself. That was all in the past. He even felt somewhat relieved knowing it was all over. He would have continued to suffer had the debts not been paid off.

They hounded Hyun for eight years, waiting for Hyun to become an adult so they could force him into dangerous work like drug dealing or worse – murdering members of rival groups. If Hyun was caught, they could just bribe the police and frame him for all their crimes. That was how they avoided most of their troubles with law enforcers.

Hyun had lived such a troubled childhood that the press and public would simply assume it was only natural for him to have committed these crimes.

One might even say such people deserved to be punished since there was no hope of salvation for them. But the wiser would understand the dangers these people had endured. Surely they too were afraid of going to jail? After all, what would happen to their families if they were arrested?

He only had his grandmother and his little sister.

The thought of them waiting for Hayan to become an adult was truly frightening. Or perhaps they would not even bother to wait that long. Young women sold for better prices, after all. In Hyun's case, a young man dealing drugs and murdering other gang members would undoubtedly draw attention.

Most people cannot fathom why a young boy would go as far as to deal drugs and assassinate gang members. Perhaps they're forced into it, or perhaps they're being framed.

If Hyun had gone to jail in such a manner, leaving his baby sister to live a hard and cruel life, he might have gone insane. Clearing the debt prevented all that from happening.

"90 million won. Plus another nine million if we add the five that we got from selling the old house and the four million we saved for emergencies."

However, they had spent 50 million on a new house. They were able to buy a house for that little because it was in a less desirable neighborhood. Though they still had 49 million won remaining after that, they had spent around 20 million over the last year. Looking back, it was an incredible loss. To begin with, the capsule for playing Royal Road cost 10 million won to buy and install, not to mention the monthly subscription fee was 300,000 won. The rest had gone to basic living expenses and Hayan's school fees.

“29 million won... Just about enough to last around 2 more years.”

Hyun, dressed in a uniform, fell to despair. It was time to start living an even thriftier lifestyle.

“Oppa, I’m home!”

(PR: ‘Oppa’ is the respectful term used by females to call older males such as older male brother or friends in Korea)

At that moment, Hayan opened the door and entered the room. Surprised, Hyun quickly hid his accounts book and bank book inside his uniform.

“You’re early. Your grades come in today, right?”

“Yeah, here it is.”

“Let’s see...”

Hyun impatiently opened the report card. This was an important moment for Hayan, who was in her second year of high school.

“3rd place in your class, 14th place in your grade... Your rank went up a bit since last time.”

“Of course! Whose sister do you think I am?”

“Well, let’s leave it at that.”

“What’s with that tone?” Hayan pouted.

Hyun then looked at the list of prospective colleges at the bottom of the report. Korea University was at the top of the list, with a 98% chance of her being accepted. Until a short time ago, she used to hang out with kids who might’ve been a bad influence, but Hayan still had a good brain. Once she returned to being his gentle little sister, her grades had improved rapidly. Eventually, it became almost certain that she would be able to get into university.

‘Still...’

One could spend over 10 million won a week going to college. Not just paying for classes, but transportation, food and books, so that she can keep up with her peers.

*

“These test results are very good. Eyesight isn’t bad, and the liver and kidneys are very healthy.”

“How is the marrow?”

“Great. Though for a bone marrow transplant, there needs to be a matching recipient. But I’m sure a buyer will appear soon. The reactions of the intestines are very good, and the bloodstream is also free from infections.”

Hyun listened to each and every word spoken by the doctor.

“Then the tests are over?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you. Please send me the documents. I will sell whatever makes me the most money fast. But let me wait 1 year and 4 months. If I still need the money then, I’ll get the surgery.”

“I will send the documents.”

Coming out of the hospital, Hyun didn’t feel any better hearing he was physically healthy.

Selling organs.

He had discovered this hospital through the black market. 50 million won for a single eyeball, 30 million for a kidney. Though livers and bone marrow needed a compatible recipient, they could be sold for about 20 million won each. He had only about 1 year and 4 months left.

Royal Road would become money, he was certain of that. However, he needed to consider the alternate possibilities. If Hayan needed more money to go to college, Hyun was prepared to sell his body parts.

Royal Road, is a game to be enjoyed. But Hyun could not afford the luxury of being so carefree. He had to force himself to work harder to earn more money and become Royal Road's richest man.

'Lee Hayan, you must succeed my unfulfilled dreams. I will make sure you won't have to make the sacrifices that I've had to make.'

Hyun, wearing worn-out clothes, came back home muttering like a possessed man. He did not care what happened to him. Losing one eye would not affect his life much, not when it came to earning money.

He wanted to make sure that at least his sister would grow up cheerfully away from the harshness of life.

If one went through too much hardship, a shadow would appear across the face. It is inevitable since they would be different from those who grew up in a good environment. The mind would weaken, giving way to fear which in turn erodes self-confidence. Out of greed, Hyun had tried hard even at a young age to attain the confidence and Intelligence attributed to rich kids.

Even if he himself could not eat or be clothed properly, he would make sure his little sister would never need to be jealous of others. There aren't many men who would do this for their younger sister.

Maybe not all older brothers are like this, but Hyun's feelings for his little sister were unrivaled. She wasn't just his little sister, she was almost his own daughter.

Hayan had lost her parents at a young age. Since then, the one who cared for her and raised her was not the busy grandmother, but Hyun himself.

*

Now, there was no more Irene's holy magic, nor Romuna's AOE spells or alarms and Surka's relentless punches were nowhere to be found, nor were Pale's lightning-fast range attacks. Nevertheless, Weed still had himself.

Hunting in a party was fine, but with more people arguments were inevitable, wasting time. In the worst case, the hunt ended before it could even begin.

In comparison, hunting solo had the benefit of simplicity. There was no pointless wasting of time and proved great for raising skill points. It was better to fight solo to improve Sword Mastery and other combat techniques.

“Grr, human!”

A Skeleton Knight, radiating a battle aura, swung its sword toward his head. The armored Skeleton Knight's with its quick moves were undoubtedly intimidating, but Weed's movements

were also unique. Gliding smoothly, he dodged the Skeleton Knight's attacks as he slowly whittled away his opponent's health. As a result, the Skeleton Knight's movements began to slow.

“Sculpting Blade!” he roared.

Finally, Weed's sword shattered the Skeleton Knight's ribcage and the light faded from its hollowed eyes, an affirmation of death. Fights in Royal Road were very realistic. The special effects for things getting broken or smashed were flawless.

A solo player had great opportunities to boost the Strength stat. This particular stat determined the power behind attacks, just like in the real world. A player used that power when fighting monsters. Maximum damage was not dealt if attacks did not employ strength. For example, a punch thrown while running away had much lower destructive power as opposed to a punch thrown at a close range. Therefore, damage was determined by how much one could control his own power. Posture, muscle use, proximity, and explosion of power.

Royal Road was a virtual reality game that allowed players to exploit an enemy's weakness. Players of Royal Road, like veteran warriors, were keenly aware of their own strength. Not just via numbers on their stat window, but by actually experiencing their own destructive power. There was such joy in destruction! Of course, Weed was no exception.

He had dedicated himself to practicing swordsmanship for a year in order to master accuracy, dodging and the basics of battle. Through his many practice matches, he had become unafraid of

battles to the point of actually enjoying fights against stronger opponents.

The sword became his way and his tool. The sword was the best tool to use to understand the basics of movement and fighting. Of course, a person who started Royal Road without learning swordsmanship or martial arts could still become familiar with fighting skills. Actually, that was how most players did it, thinking of it as just another part of the game to get used to. But his perspective was different.

The tree whose roots run deep will grow taller. A player who fought monsters without a strong foundation in swordsmanship could only grow up deformed. Weed had practiced swordsmanship for a year before ever facing a monster! And by fighting progressively stronger monsters, his skills improved. This was the reason Weed was even stronger than his stats suggested.

“Hmm... With this, I have all the items I need to complete the quest.”

“Whew... I should just replenish the mana.” Weed’s mana was half depleted, so he decided to take a brief break.

Since Weed was doing the work of many people on his own, he was always on the alert, never truly relaxing. While he waited for his mana to replenish, he sat and sculpted with enthusiasm. The sculpture he was making was in the shape of a crow.

Making a sculpture for the first time significantly raises both the

Art stat and Sculpture Mastery. Since Weed had decided to make each new sculpture unique, his Art stat and Sculpture Mastery were rising quickly. His goal was to make sculptures for each Avian tribe in Lavias.

Weed returned to Lavias and distributed the sculptures he had made to the Avians.

“This sculpture is the only one of its kind in the entire world. I sculpted all your appearances with my own hands!”

“Thanks.”

Each Avian received a sculpture that resembles them. As they took them, they said, “I can’t take this for free.”

“How much do you want me to give you?”

Each time they asked, Weed gave the same reply. “Let’s not complicate our relationship by getting money involved. But I’m very interested in Lavias. Could you tell me something about this city?”

“Mmm... Then I’ll tell you about the Northern Nest...”

“I’ll tell you about the habits of the undead in the underground.”

The Avians’ stories became an important source of information.

Though they were mostly just useless gossip, sometimes there was information about quests or hunting grounds.

Weed went to the Crow, who stood in front of the armor shop.

“What is this?”

“I made this sculpture for Crow-nim.”

“Hoh, thank you,” Crow said, flapping his wings in appreciation. Then he spoke up, as if a thought had just occurred to him. “Have you ever gone to the Dead Warrior’s Cave?”

“The Dead Warrior’s Cave?”

“Yes, if you come out of Memphis Hall and walk north for thirty minutes, you can see the entrance. Careful, though, there are Ghouls, Skeleton Mercenaries and Dullahan there. You won’t survive if you go in without proper preparations.”

In Royal Road, levels rose faster when fighting monsters above your own level. Skeleton Soldiers and Mages were no longer a match for Weed, and he was getting bored of the Skeleton Knights that only wandered around alone.

Weed prepared his bag with an abundance of medicinal herbs, food and fresh water. On the Continent, Weed would only need things like condiments and spices, since he could find edible plants or catch and cook animals with his Cooking Skills. But since

Memphis Hall had only the Undead, he had to pack food.

On his way to the grocery store he met an Avian resembling a parrot. “Oh, a human traveler. Come, come!”

“Nice to meet you,” replied Weed with a sigh.

‘Bah, what a bird-brain!’

Weed had met this Avian resembling a parrot a while ago, and of course given him a sculpture as a token of friendship. He had liked it very much at the time. But a few days later, Weed visited him again and he had forgotten all about Weed.

When Weed tried to remind him about the sculpture, he angrily told Weed not to talk nonsense. He then called Weed a thief and threw him out. Frustrated, Weed visited him yet again and was greeted warmly as a customer. That was when Weed realized something about the Avians.

‘They have terrible memory!’

Don’t people say that a goldfish can’t remember anything beyond three seconds?

Then these Avians were better than goldfish, but the fact remained that they possessed the undersized brains of birds. They forgot Weed’s existence even after he had introduced himself multiple times. Because of this, Weed’s strategy to make friends

with them wasn't working.

He ended up having to get everything he could out of them right then and there while they were still being friendly to him. "I came to buy beans, sesame seeds, corn, walnuts, fish, leeks, pork, peanuts and spinach."

"Oh, is that so?"

The parrot-looking avian took out foods one by one as Weed ordered them and checked them several times before saying, "That'll be 19 gold."

"Here it is. Ah, but I only have 18 gold and 50 silver. Can I give you the rest the next time I come?"

The Avian merchant took a long look at Weed.

"You're not a merchant. I couldn't give you a discount because you're not experienced in bartering. You are a somewhat famous adventurer, but not that famous. But you have artistic talent. I can't deny someone who may be the next famous artist. I'll trust you and take that 50 silver next time."

Weed left with his goods, having paid 50 silver less.

The foods he bought could raise mana temporarily, so of course the price would be high.

Now the question was whether or not the parrot-like Avian would remember to ask for the 50 silver. Seeing as he had forgotten the 40 silvers weed had promised him last time, it seemed unlikely.

With that, the first step of his preparations ended. Next he had to hone his fighting skills.

“Open Stats Window”

Character Name:

Weed

Alignment:

Neutral

Profession:

Legendary Moonlight Sculptor

Title:

None

Level:

109

Fame:

365

Health:

5260

Mana:

1521

Strength:

335 (+20)

Agility:

305 (+20)

Vitality:

89 (+20)

Wisdom:

16 (+20)

Intelligence:

24 (+20)

Fighting Spirit:

143 (+20)

Endurance:

174 (+20)

Perseverance:

55 (+20)

Art:

84 (+100)

Charisma:

74 (+20)

Luck:

5 (+20)

Offence:

231

Defense:

76

Magic Resistance:

None

+20 points add to all stats (+20 ALL STATS)

+80 points added Art (+80 ART)

+30% increase to Stats on Moonlit Nights

Gained ability to equip and use class specific items

Gained ability to learn all craft skills to the stage of a Master

Crafting skills are optional and advanced skills are available

Grants extra options to items that are produced or refined

Increases Attack Power for the Sculpting Blade technique

Decreases Mana Consumption for the Sculpting Blade technique

Enables you to learn secret skills based on your level in Sculpture
Mastery

Increases Fame rapidly by creating statues of extraordinary beauty or artistic value

Weed's Level was over 100. So when Weed and his party discovered Memphis Hall and received double experience points, they had concentrated on hunting the whole time.

They decreased their sleep time by two hours, and even stayed connected while they slept. This way, Weed had gotten to level 95. Hunting solo, he had since then raised it to 109.

His stats had been greatly boosted thanks to the level gains. His Mana was now high enough to allow him to use the 4th Imperial Formless Sword Technique, Sword Dance; though only once.

The only unsatisfying part was that there had been no increase in Charisma. This skill rose not only when giving orders to NPCs, but also when one was a party leader. However, since he had been hunting alone, there had been no way to improve his Charisma stat and certain other skills had also increased by very little.

Cooking (Beginner Lv: 8 | 45%)

Sculpting Mastery (Beginner Lv: 9 | 99%)

Repair (Beginner Lv: 7 | 25%):

Handcraft (Intermediate Lv: 2 | 6%):

Sword Mastery (Beginner Lv: 8 | 88%):

Archery (Beginner Lv: 5 | 98%):

Sculpting Blade (Beginner Lv: 7 | 49%):

Imperial Formless Sword Techniques (Comprehension 5%):

Bandage (Beginner Lv: 7 | 11%):

Identification (Beginner Lv: 5 | 14%):

Sculpting Blade Technique (Beginner Lv: 7 | 30%):

Sculpting was about to rise to intermediate. As for Sculpting Blade, the mana cost had significantly decreased after reaching level 7.

He had used Sword Kaiser a few times lately, but for hunting solo

it was more effective to use the Sculpting Blade technique, due to its ability to cut through the unseen and bypass armor. This was critical when fighting the Undead as it effectively severed the soul. This sword technique was, therefore, akin to holy magic in its ability to destroy the Undead.

“Not bad.”

Weed smiled as he headed toward the market to buy antidotes, medicinal herbs and bandages.

His eyes grew sad at the thought of spending money again. Truthfully, he had never bought items before. He made his own food, and sometimes even sold it.

Sculptures carved from cheap materials could also be sold for a gold or two. Naturally, this was not a small sum.

When he was with Pale and the others, he always told them he had only 30 gold, even after taking his portion of the loot. But his profit from selling sculptures and food was 200 gold! He had accumulated 650 gold through hunting, selling loot and collecting quest rewards.

But to be in position to spend money was greater agony than being penniless. Weed's shoulders drooped and his face looked like one facing death whenever he went into a store.

Especially when paying, he seemed like a person having a near

death experience. Therefore, no one could comprehend why his heart ached so, or why he was always short a few silvers.

Chapter 6: The Meaning Behind Royal Road

Weed now knew the first floor of Memphis Hall like his own home. He knew perfectly well where the dangerous Death Knights patrolled, and the best spots to hunt Skeleton Knights.

Being a solo hunter without a party, what Weed dreaded the most was an ambush right when he had low health and mana. For this reason, Weed prepared a few hideouts where he stashed plenty of bandages and herbs.

He had figured out safe spots to rest and places where he could most effectively target his enemies. Bandages and herbs were easily obtained, however the knowledge of the hideouts was priceless. He had selected these locations after countless trial and error. But afterwards, without regrets, he had cleared out those spots.

“It’s here, huh.” After going through the Northern area, Weed finished exploring the entire region.

Ting

You are the first to completely map Memphis Hall B1 Floor Map:

Fame has risen by 20 points (+20 FAME)

When Weed had first come to the City of Heaven, he had bought a map. Later the places he traveled to were added to this map. The Map of Memphis Hall's basement was now an item which could be sold for quite a high price at the General Store or to other users. There was no way he would pass up this opportunity to get easy money.

Weed left Memphis Hall and headed for the Cave of Dead Warriors. It wasn't a difficult place to find. The moment he descended into the cave, he heard eerie noises.

'What is this?' he could sense a light draft and the low growl of something dangerous. Murky darkness filled his vision and the noises were getting louder.

'I don't feel so good about this.' he thought as a chill ran down his spine.

Weed moved cautiously keeping his right hand on his sword just in case something popped up out of the shadows.

'So I'm not the first one to discover this place. I suppose the people, who first discovered Lavias also discovered this dungeon,'

A short distance away, Weed came upon an undead blocking his

path.

“Human! Are you a knight?”

It was a huge, muscular knight with a body much bigger than a Skeleton Knight or a Lizard Man. He had broad shoulders and dangerous looking arms, but above the neck, there was nothing. The missing head was instead carried by his left arm. He was the most unique monster among all the undead – a knight that carried around his own head. It was this head that had spoken.

‘A Dullahan, huh.’

Weed recognized his opponent – an undead around level 140!

“I am not a knight.” Weed replied.

“Then what are you?”

“I am a Sculptor.” he replied calmly.

“A scul-Sculptor?!” the Dullahan sputtered.

Incredible disappointment filled the Dullahan’s face. Dullahans loved to improve their skills through combat. They were a type of knight that made the Skeleton Knights pale in comparison.

“You’re a Sculptor? What a disappointment,” the Dullahan mumbled.

Weed was used to being underestimated because of his class. A Sculptor must look so pathetic that even the undead ignored them!

The creator of Royal Road was Unicorn Corporations. There was much controversy when they released the game. It was the first ever virtual reality game. A reality that was 100% based off of fantasy. But why was it named Royal Road? There had been so many other possible names to choose from. Even though Royal Road received worldwide attention, its title was somewhat disappointing. It wasn’t a name that stuck with you when you heard it.

But there was a reason Unicorn Corporation chose the name Royal Road. No one on earth had been able to conquer and rule over every continent and ocean. This game was the road to that great empire. The unified empire that not even Genghis Khan, Napoleon, or Alexander the Great could achieve. The game paved the way for people to achieve that dream.

It was a hope for something never before seen in the history of mankind; an Emperor who would conquer every single continent. It taught people to dream, to hope to be whatever they want to be, and this hope would drive them towards their goal. This was the true meaning behind “Royal Road”.

The first to conquer the entire land would be given prize money: 10% of Unicorn Corporations sales for one month. This was an enormous sum. In Korea alone, millions played the game. Globally,

Japan, Europe and America combined; the users amounted to over 100 million. Not to mention Royal Road cost \$300 USD a month to play. It was difficult to calculate such a huge amount of money. 10% of that would make someone instantly rich.

That was why most players in Royal Road chose fighting-type classes. Most users chose to advance from Swordsman to Knight, seeing battle-related classes as the fastest path to becoming the Emperor. Blacksmiths and other trade classes were looked down upon. There was no need to even mention Artists, Chefs, or Sculptors who couldn't even fit in with the trade classes. It was their fate to be belittled and ignored.

‘Just like my own life.’ Weed thought.

Without a word, Weed drew his Clay Sword. An icy blue aura emanated from it. The Clay Sword had a special ability to slow down an enemy's movements upon a direct hit.

“Uurrrg!” The Dullahan charged, swinging his axe fast. Weed raised his Clay Sword, parrying the attacks.

Slam!

Ting

Item: Clay Sword's durability has decreased

The message was accompanied by the shock of the impact that made Weed's arms shudder. He had just finished repairing that sword, but this one attack was able to lower its durability. It seemed that the Dullahan's specialty was his brute strength.

"I can't lose! Sculpting Blade!" Weed yell and attacked relentlessly.

The two exchanged blows rapidly. Weed, charged with the intent to kill, aimed for the vital points. Battles had to be finished as quickly and as simply as possible. That was the only way to minimize the risk of enemy reinforcements showing up.

For Weed, who hunted alone, another Dullahan or monster appearing would mean nothing but trouble. Besides Weed could sculpt as a side job while he rested. This meant that he had to reduce the time spent fighting as much as possible.

Bash! The Dullahan used a skill with his axe swing, pushing Weed back a great distance.

"Devil's Strike!" The Dullahan roared, initiating a chain attack.

The axe, now launched into the air, and spun violently as it came flying. Although Weed ducked to avoid the blow, his HP dropped by 300 just from the wind pressure.

If he had used the ‘Seven Celestial Steps’, he could have dodged it completely, however he chose to get hit.

The point was to raise his level of Defense while working on his Perseverance.

Now it was Weed’s turn.

“Triple!” The first strike missed, while the second, more destructive strike came from the opposite direction. The enemy managed to dodge both attacks, causing Weed to execute a powerful swing from the bottom-up.

By then the throwing axe had boomeranged back to its owner and the Dullahan thrust it forward to block Weed’s third attack. At that instant, Weed’s sword crisscrossed through the Dullahan’s chest, making a total of five consecutive attacks. Triple had evolved as Weed’s mastery of the skill increased.

The Dullahan had somehow blocked the first three attacks, but the next two lowered his HP by more than 20%. He went into a frenzy trying to push Weed back by repeatedly using his Bash ability. But by now Weed had already worked out his skills timing, and swiftly carved into the Dullahan’s side.

“Aren’t you dead yet, just die already!? Sculpting Blade!” Milky white light surrounded Weed’s blade.

Then came the merciless strikes!

The Dullahan's health points were decreasing rapidly as the strikes sounded.

He tried attacking again, but Weed dodged them all.

Weed could anticipate the Dullahan's skills by watching his footsteps, and then dodge them by moving his upper body. Ultimately, the Dullahan wasn't a difficult enemy for him. The gap in levels might have been wide, but through jobs and training, Weed was above the Dullahan in terms of stats. Weed's Perseverance stat was at the same level as the Dullahan's. Thanks to that, he had no real disadvantage. Although, level 80 Skeleton Mages were actually more annoying.

Mages were troublesome to fight because they cast countless curses. When Irene the Priest was there, the curses were easily dispelled, but now Weed could only dispel the curses with potions after the battle was over. Each Curse Dispelling Potion cost three silvers. This sometimes took the profit out of hunting, so Weed hated Skeleton Mages the most.

"Uwwagggh..." Sometime later the Dullahan's body disappeared in a gray light as his horse neighed shrilly.

"Phew... that was easier than I expected. But one of them can take down 40% of my health, it would be dangerous if two of them challenged me at once."

Weed headed to a hidden corner to level his sculpting after he picked up the greaves the Dullahan dropped.

“Let’s try sculpting a Dullahan.”

Weed’s mastery didn’t increase as much by making sculptures he had made before. But making a sculpture for the first time increased Handicraft and Art skills significantly.

Weed took out Zahab’s Sculpting Knife and a piece of wood and started to sculpt the figure of the Dullahan he just saw. He was so used to sculpting now that if he simply pictured it in his mind, he could carve it. The cave was silent save for the echo of Weed’s sculpting.

“It would be great if my Sculpting level would rise to Intermediate...” Weed thought.

His current Sculpting skill was 99% to level 10. He had also made five sculptures of Avians, so he thought it was possible to level up.

“Please let me achieve Intermediate level!”

Weed wished as he finished the Dullahan’s head.

The Dullahan sculpture was complete: A knight with a buff body, menacing eyes and a huge blade.

Ting

Upgrade: Sculpting (Beginner Lv: 10 to Intermediate Lv: 1 | 0%)

You can now craft using special metals and gemstones (Pearl, diamond, ruby, etc.)

For your class, Moonlight Sculptor, the current skills and stats will be affected:

Effect of Sculpting Blade has increased by +50%

Additional effects have been added to Sculpting blade's skill

Mana cost for Sculpting Blade has been halved

All Stats have risen by 10 points (+10 ALL STATS)

Fame has risen by 20 points (+20 FAME)

Art has risen by 20 points (+20 ART)

New Skill: Sculptural Destruction

Weed shook with happiness. Words could not describe Weed's feelings at that moment.

All the sadness and loneliness he was made to feel as he learned sculpting!

All of the humiliation and scorn he had to suffer because of his job as a Sculptor! Weed felt his rage vanish into thin air.

Finally, he had achieved Intermediate level in Sculpting.

The job of Sculptor, which he had wanted to quit so badly at first, felt like the job he was destined for.

The Sculpting Blade skill had proven to have the greatest efficiency so far! Every time Weed used Sculpting Blade, his sculpting skill increased ever so slightly and since it was closely tied to Sculpting, the skill was enhanced as his Sculpting Mastery advanced from beginner to Intermediate.

“Hmm, an additional ability?”

“Check Skill: Sculpting Blade”

Sculpting Blade (Beginner Lv: 7 | 50%):

Zahab's visionary sword skill, carried on by those destined to carve the invisible or intangible.

Defends against magic of lower mastery than Sculpting Blade. When spells are absorbed, the caster only incurs 50% of original mana cost.

Mana consumption: Sustained – 25 mana per second.

Weed could only laugh. For knights, mages were the most difficult opponents. Long-range magic attacks were very hard to dodge. But now Sculpting Blade was able to absorb this magic. Even if the opponent only used half the mana they had, it was hundreds of times better than getting hit.

“Since the mana cost for Sculpting Blade is also reduced, maybe I could use it when executing Triple or Backstab?” he said aloud as he pondered this idea.

Sculpting Blade was more of a buff than an attack. Combining Sculpting Blade with the Imperial Formless Sword Technique would cost an enormous amount of mana, but Weed believed the result would be unparalleled. Besides, there was always Sculpture Destruction.

“Check Skill: Sculptural Destruction”

Skill: Sculptural Destruction:

Sculptor's skill:

The anger involved in destroying one of your own sculptures is converted temporarily into either strength or agility for one day.

Destruction of Ordinary sculpture:

1:2 conversion of the Art stat is temporarily applied to either stat (-1 Art stat, -20 Fame).

Destruction of Fine statue:

1:4 conversion of the Art stat is temporarily applied to either stat (-5 Art stat, -100 Fame).

Destruction of Masterpiece:

1:6 conversion of the Art stat is temporarily applied to either stat (-10 Art stat, -200 Fame).

Destruction of Magnum Opus:

1:20 conversion of the Art stat is temporarily applied to either stat (-30 Art stat, -1000 Fame).

Warning:

Fame will drop and the corresponding points will be deducted from Art stat.

The amount of Art stat converted to Strength or Agility depended on the quality of the sculpture destroyed. Destroying a normal statue converted double the amount of Art stat into strength or agility for a day while destroying a fine or great statue would convert four or six times the Art stat into strength or agility.

This would be a commonly used skill for sculptors with low strength or agility. Sculptors who only sculpt statues in the game would have a high Art stat, but it would be hard for them to hunt because of their battle stats. This skill allowed those Sculptors to change their Art stat to other stats but the problem lay in the Fame and Art stat penalty that accompanied its use.

The Art stat was hard to increase, meaning that this skill had to be used cautiously. There was such an extreme penalty for destroying a statue that it felt very difficult and unsettling to use.

In other words, this skill was a double-edged sword. Weed

decided to stow it away and not use it if he could help it. Temporary strength or agility was not true power. Even without Sculpting Destruction, Weed had become strong once his Sculpting skills reached Intermediate. All his stats had risen by 10 and Sculpting Blade's power had doubled as well.

Weed wasn't the only one to enjoy this advantage. Any trade skill such as cooking, tailoring, smithing, fishing, farming, held advantages such as stat, skill or Fame bonuses when proficiency went up. When it reached Intermediate, all stats gained 5 points; when proficiency reached Advanced, all stats gained an additional 10 points.

None yet knew how many points would be gained upon gaining Mastery in a skill. Any skills proficiency rose based on the user. In Weed's case, he got 10 stat points; twice the amount gained by normal players, due to the secret class – Moonlight Sculptor – and thanks to his quest related to Zahab, Sculpting Blade had improved particularly well...

No one had ever mastered any of the production skills before because the path was too difficult. It had taken a Weed a lot of time and effort just to reach the intermediate level. It would be even more difficult to progress from Intermediate to Expert. However, at that moment, Weed firmly decided that he would become Master in all trade skills.

Delicate aesthetic senses and burning passion for art had little to do with Weed, but he had a talent that no one else had: the talent of hard work.

The Cave of Dead Warriors was a hunting ground where Dullahan and Skeleton Mercenaries, who are both around level 120, and Ghouls around level 110 frequently appeared. Ghouls were lower in levels, but they always appeared in groups of four or five, and there were many kinds of ghouls. Upgraded or Named Ghouls sometimes had levels over 130.

Dullahans and Skeleton Mercenaries had great swordsmanship, so the battles were thrilling. But Ghouls usually just charged in, trusting their clumsy but strong defense.

Weed had to learn how to attack while dodging their vicious attacks.

“Good. This place is perfect.”

Weed had chosen the Cave of Dead Warriors as his new hunting ground. Named monsters, whether they are Dullahan, Skeleton Mercenaries, or Ghouls, were a bit more dangerous, but fighting them had great advantages.

It was perfect for Weed, who fought mainly with fists or swords.

There was the odd Skeleton Mage here and there, but their magic was no longer effective. Blocking with Sculpting Blade nullified their magic; sometimes the spells would rebound, putting the mages in a difficult situation.

It seemed the rate of reflecting the magic depended on the

mastery of Sculpting Blade. He needed to practice sculpting in order to raise it. Leveling his sculpting was now as important as gaining experience points and levels.

Weed, who was doing very well so far, still had one opponent he had to be wary of: the Death Knight. These monsters were over level 200 and appeared much more often in the Cave of Dead Warriors. They wandered about, never staying in any specific area. Weed had to hold his breath and move stealthily to hide from them. Thankfully, Death Knights had bad eyesight, so Weed could relax when he hid in a corner. He sometimes went so far as to dig some ditches and hide in them whenever a Death Knight approached.

“When did I become like this...?”

When he had played Continent of Magick, every monster was weak against his max level character, but now he had to hide from Death Knights.

Nevertheless, Weed felt some satisfaction. With his high mana recovery rate and mastery in First Aid, Weed’s down time was much lower.

Thanks to this, Weed was able to gain levels much faster. Plus there were much better item drops here compared to the first floor. So what if he had to do some lame things, Weed had come this far already, so going a little farther wouldn’t hurt.

“Dullahan are the best monsters for hunting. But is there

anything better? It'd be nice if there was something weaker than Death Knights but strong enough to give a lot of experience points..."

Weed moved cautiously not forgetting to make his hiding places in key areas. He didn't need anyone to teach him this, he simply persisted to adapt and survive like a cockroach.

After going through many Ghouls and Skeleton Mercenaries, Weed came upon a wide cavern where an underground river flowed gently through.

Flowers and even some herbs were blooming all over. It was about time to rest since he had just been in a fierce battle against Skeleton Mercenaries. Weed re-filled his water bottle and was just about to sit when he saw a silhouette. Upon further inspection, he found a woman sleeping in the middle of the dungeon, with nobody else around.

"Who are you?" she asked. Weed, who had been waiting for her to wake up, was startled.

"I'm Weed. Wh-what about you?"

It was an rather unpolished introduction, not like him at all. Admittedly he had never imagined that there was someone other than himself would be here.

And the look on her eyes as she woke... was exactly Weed's type.

“My name is Da’in,” she said, smiling with an aloof smile.

Hyun hadn’t met many girls before. Of course, he had taken classes with girls, but he’d never spent time with one personally. It wasn’t that he was unpopular. There were some girls who approached Hyun, saying that his downcast and detached aura was attractive. He found them foolish.

“You think this is cool? Try experiencing poverty yourself and you’ll change your mind.”

He hadn’t gone on dates with girls either. Dining out, even just coffee cost money. Hyun found food samples from the grocery stores and home-cooked meals much more economical. What he really couldn’t understand was why dating a girl involved spending enormous amounts of money every time there was some sort of anniversary.

Plus, when others went to the drive-in to watch movies, Weed climbed up a nearby telephone pole. The only time he watched TV was when somebody else had one. Of course, he’d picked up a TV that someone had thrown away, but he didn’t watch it because it would run up the electricity bill. He only ever watched it around midnight when the electricity charges were much lower. The cheapskate Hyun, and therefore Weed, had almost no experience with girls.

Da’in. That name was deeply engraved into Weed’s mind. Every man had a dream girl. Weed was no exception.

The woman of his dreams had long natural hair, a young, intelligent face, and a kind, attractive smile. But these were nothing but details.

If a girl could make him fall in love at first sight, then she was his dream girl. Weed developed a small crush on Da'in. That was it.

‘I don’t trust anyone...’

He hadn’t completely trusted Pale or Surka either even though they had trained together. Weed had unfortunately found out that humans change and not always for the best.

They might appear to be friends at the moment but he highly doubted that they would take a bullet for him.

‘Give as much as you take, no more and no less.’ Was Weed’s philosophy. He could not trust anyone except his family.

Weed’s gaze sharpened. “Da’in, how did you come to be here?”

Only Avians lived in the City of Heaven. Humans could not climb up there and judging by her clothing, she was an adventurer.

“Here? I’ve been here for three months already?”

Three months. A thought flashed into Weed’s mind.

“By any chance, are you one of the adventurers who discovered the City of Heaven?”

“Yes, I was part of that group, but I don’t want to talk about that.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m the only one left here.”

“I see.”

Da’in yawned gracefully and stretched.

“I’m a level 134 Shaman.”

Her level was lower than what Weed had guessed. He had assumed she would be at least level 170 since she was alone in the Cave of Dead Warriors. Weed being there at only level 109 was also an anomaly. A regular player wouldn’t have dared.

“What are you trying to say?”

“I mean if you are alone, let’s form a party. What, you don’t want to?”

“No, that sounds great.”

Weed accepted, not just because Da'in looked somewhat like the girl of his dreams, or because he trusted her. No, Weed, ever suspicious, couldn't trust a girl whom he just met just because she asked him to train in a party. But Weed liked to keep his enemies close.

The girl was suspicious. Besides, Weed had stored many items in his various hideouts within the dungeon so he couldn't just leave Da'in alone.

Shamans could use white magic to cast buffs that increased Strength, Agility and Speed, and black magic to decrease enemy stats. They could use offensive spells and healing spells, counteract poison and dispel curses. They could also wield swords and maces, meaning they had some physical combat skills.

In essence, they were the jack-of-all-trades class! However, the shaman class was unpopular since they had a few skills in every aspect, but weren't outstanding in any of them. Their healing ability was weaker than a Cleric's, and the curses they cast were weaker than a Black Mage's. Their melee skills were comparable to that of an Archer with a sword instead of a bow.

Low HP, low Vitality and magic weaker than a Mage's. Stats couldn't be invested in just one area, but had to be equally distributed, so this was a class that couldn't do much. Weed had no expectations from Da'in. He just hoped she wouldn't hold him back! Maybe he could just ditch her after retrieving all the items from his hideouts.

“Grr!”

Five Skeleton Mercenaries had appeared and Weed tensed. So far he had faced no more than three Skeleton Mercenaries at once.

No matter how great Weed’s combat skills were, it was still going to be difficult to face five at once.

With his back turned, even one or two blows could add up to considerable damage, and he couldn’t use first aid until the battle was over, so it would have been dangerous.

However, at that moment, Da’in raised her right hand and cast a spell.

“Light of courage descended from the ancients; give this hero the power to fight his enemy! Power up!”

Weed’s body glowed with bright light and his strength was raised by nearly 100. Da’in then graciously raised her arms, as though she was awaiting an embrace.

“A breeze drifts past. Fight the enemy with a light heart. Light will be your steps. Up, spirit, Wolf”

Weed’s Agility and Speed increased significantly. He took just one step towards the enemy and he felt as if he was running.

“You, fated to bring death, blood and carnage, the battlefield shall be your home! Bloodlust!”

Da'in's various Shaman buffs boosted Weed's stats, now he could easily take on the five Skeleton Mercenaries. But at that moment Da'in cast curses on the Skeleton Mercenaries: Their speed and strength decreased, they could no longer heal their wounds and they lost their will to fight.

‘No way can a Shaman's magic be this strong!’

Weed didn't understand the situation. After easily killing the five Skeleton Mercenaries, he didn't even pause to pick up the item drops before turning to question Da'in.

“Your magic is unbelievable for a level 134. How is that possible? If I don't understand the reason, we can't be in a party together.”

He ran the risk of hurting her feelings, but she answered back with a happy smile.

“It's because of my hobbies.”

“Hobbies?”

“Yes, please don't think I'm crazy. I don't like killing monsters, I just...” she spoke shyly.

“I use curses on monsters, holy magic, and sometimes ranged attack spells. After that when their HP drops, I cast Healing Hand on them...”

“On monsters?”

“Yeah, I just played around like that.”

What Da’in was saying was shocking. She was level 134 but her magic was very advanced.

So Da’in played around by cursing, then healing the Skeleton Mercenaries, Dullahan and Ghouls in the dungeon...

Chapter 7: Nameless Statues Of Laviias

Weed and Da'in.

Da'in's Bless spell raised Weed's abilities by an incredible amount, and at the same time weakened monsters. It was as if she had put wings on Weed, who was already incredible.

Their teamwork increased their potential by near-impossible amounts.

Even so, Da'in did not kill monsters. This was no loss for Weed, since he could increase his skills in Swordsmanship when she did not take part in the fights.

Even so, I can't trust a person I met in a place like this.'

Weed was constantly worried that she might betray him, even as he fought. Having spent so much time there, Da'in knew a lot of things about Laviias. According to her, until just recently she had been going around Laviias gathering information. She had gone into the dungeon just around the time Weed's party arrived.

'Pretty unbelievable story,' Weed thought. But it was true that he had never encountered her in Laviias, so it must have also been true that she had stayed in the dungeon that long. Nevertheless, that was not reason enough to believe everything else she said.

“How about we change training grounds? I happen to know of a few undiscovered dungeons, though I haven’t been to them yet.” According to Da’in’s investigations, there were at least eight undiscovered dungeons.

“When you say undiscovered dungeons, do you mean nobody has entered them yet?”

“Yes.”

Weed cocked his head in confusion. “I don’t understand.”

Da’in was a member of the first party to ever enter the City of Heaven, and yet there were dungeons they hadn’t visited? It was very hard to believe.

“There was no reason to, since everyone other than me was over level 200.”

“So they didn’t bother to enter the lower-level dungeons? Even so, I don’t think anyone would purposely ignore a dungeon.”

There were multiple benefits to discovering a dungeon, but the one that couldn’t be ignored was the increase in Fame. A considerable amount of Fame was gained for discovering a dungeon, and exploring the whole map of it awarded even more Fame, and even money.

Even if their levels were so high that there was nothing worth

hunting, who would pass on that Fame? Da'in was hiding something about the party she had been part of.

“If you don't tell me, then I won't move from here.”

“I can't tell you what they did...”

“Is it a secret?”

“Yes, I promised not to tell anyone... It's hard to explain, but I am telling the truth. You have to trust me.”

Weed decided to let it go. There was nothing he could do to convince her to reveal the secret.

Words that seemed frail had a higher chance of being true. Plus, they had just left the Cave of Dead Warriors to explore other dungeons. So at least she was being truthful about that.

Mirkan Tower.

Secret Area of Pan Lake.

Baravall Coal Mine.

Segmail Vista.

Gaet Altar.

Parrot Nest.

Barlog Ruins.

Sealed Cave of Margres the Destroyer.

These areas had been left unexplored. Weed and Da'in arrived at the region, out of sight from the city. Mirkan Tower seemed as if it had risen up from the clouds. As expected, Weed and Da'in became the first to discover the place. They were mainly up against flying monsters.

Weed had Archery as his long-range attack skill. He used a tough strung bow that made good use of his stats to deal heavy damage.

For just 10 gold coins, users could buy special feathers near the tower and use them to fly for a whole month. Plus, Dungeon discovery meant double the experience points and double the item drops! Weed and Da'in explored and trained in Mirkan Tower, the Secret Area of Pan

Lake and Baravall Coal Mine one by one. At the Balrog Ruins, Gaet Altar and Segmail Vista, the weakest monsters were Death Knights. Nobody dared enter those areas and they had been sealed off. Nevertheless, with Da'in's help Weed made good progress and gained incredible amount of experience and items.

‘Now, if I can just make this...’

Weed was glaring at two lobsters at that moment. Next to him, Da’in also stared down at the lobsters and gulped. Weed’s Cooking Skill was 99% to reaching beginner level 10, so he chose a special dish for the final 1%. The best a Beginner level Cook could dish out was seafood, that is, the famous lobster!

Of course, Hyun had never eaten lobster in his whole life. It was simply too expensive. One of the reasons he was so diligent in practicing his Cooking Skills was so he could taste food such as these.

The lobsters struggled, but they were no match for Weed’s cold glare. Ultimately, they could only drop their antennae in defeat. Weed, however, was not trying to stare them down to death; he was trying to visualize that expensive lobster meat. Weed’s hands shivered. Even in the game lobsters were rare and expensive. In Lavias they could be purchased for the hefty price of one gold each. If he had not explored the dungeons with double the item drop rate, he wouldn’t have even have considered buying them.

‘After I cook these suckers, I will be at Intermediate level Cooking.’

Weed’s willful hands moved like lightning as he grabbed the lobsters’ heads with his left hand and used Zahab’s sculpting knife in his right to slash them from head to tail. The lobsters’ bodies split in half and Weed quickly rinsed off the sand and took out the eggs. Right away, he began to stir-fry it in a frying pan, along with the sauces and spices he had previously prepared. Soon steam was

seen rising and the lobster was cooked to perfection. Finally, the lobster dish was done!

Ting

Upgrade: Cooking (Beginner Lv: 10 to Intermediate Lv: 1 | 0%)

You can now cook a greater variety of entrees, and while satiated, various abilities are raised depending on the type of entree and ingredients used. (Example: Drake’s egg, various herbs).

Your Affinity with Earth has increased by 30

Earth-based magic resistance has increased by +20%. Fire and Water-based magic resistance has increased by +10%.

All Stats have risen by 5 points (+5 ALL STATS)

Fame has risen by 10 points (+10 FAME)

New Skill: Wine-brewing

His desire to reach Intermediate level Cooking Skill finally paid

off and came true, the rewards were also very satisfying. Equipment for raising magic resistance was quite expensive, but he could raise his magic resistance simply through his Cooking Skill.

“Wow that looks delicious.” Da’in, who had been waiting patiently for the food to be cooked, rolled back her sleeves and rushed towards it. Weed also hurried to eat his portion of the lobster.

Weed fought while Da’in assisted. The two dominated the dungeons. Da’in worked so hard at healing and casting buffs that Weed didn’t regret forming a party with her. Da’in was a woman who became more mysterious the better he got to know her. When she spotted a monster, she cursed them multiple times all while looking at them with sorrowful eyes. Plus she was not careless with money or items. Whenever Weed tried to get a few more silvers, or even coppers, she noticed and pointed it out.

Near the Secret Area of Pan Lake, there were many places where herbs bloomed. There she bent down with no hesitation and dug up the herbs. A formidable survival instinct! Sometimes she would write a poem or sing a song. Her clear, refreshing voice rang out beautifully.

Thanks to that, Weed could hunt joyfully.

‘To think that it could be this much fun not being alone...’

No one else visited Lavias. Pale and Surka messaged him, saying they had settled in a hunting ground near the Citadel of Serabourg.

Since their parents were still new players, it was hard for them to leave.

At all times they were alone together. Plus, she was a woman who looked like the one in his dreams. As a man, it would be a lie to say his eyes had never strayed toward her. At first, Da'in was all smiles, but sometimes a shadow crossed her face. However, it lit up again as she hunted and had her meals with Weed.

One day, Weed decided he wanted to become her friend. "Um... Do you want to hunt together from now on?" he asked.

But Da'in fell silent.

"I'm sorry, Weed-nim,"

She said after a while, with a serious expression on her face.

"What do you mean?"

"Once, I made a bad decision. I thought nobody loved me... I couldn't trust anybody."

"... Is that, by any chance, why you were left alone in Laviass?"

"It's hard to explain the whole story, but yes, it's somewhat related. Anyway, I was encouraged by spending time with you, Weed-nim. Perhaps, I might find my place once again..."

“So?”

Weed was a bit frustrated. It was good to hear that spending time with him had helped her regain her courage, but hearing that she would go back made him feel like he had been used.

No one liked being used.

“I didn’t mean it like that. After meeting you, I feel as if I can live on.”

“No way. Do you...”

“Yes, I... am ill. Even though I can get an operation, it’s not certain that it will make me better. I was postponing the surgery, but it’s time to take the chance.”

“.....”

“Please don’t look at me like that. I’ll be fine. Destiny and coincidence are so similar it’s sometimes hard to decide which it is. I don’t want our meeting to be a coincidence. If it was destiny for us to meet, then we will meet again. I really hope I can meet Weed-nim again.”

With that, Da’in logged out. Weed felt empty after Da’in had left him. He hadn’t really spent much time with her because he was

suspicious of her and concentrated on hunting. Maybe she never tried to hide her sickness. Weed was always busy. As soon as she logged on, he would drag her somewhere to hunt.

For over a month, they had barely conversed and just hunted. He felt regret. Maybe Da'in would never come back.

‘If she never comes back, there won’t be many people who would remember her. She was in Lavias alone and nobody came to look for her. I guess that’s the reason why she spent her time cursing and buffing monsters.’

Loneliness and fear of death can only be understood by those who had experienced it.

Weed hunted, while waiting for Da'in, but she didn't come back even after three months passed in the game. In the real world, it had been about three weeks. If it was a life-threatening surgery, it might take her months to recover.

‘She will come back even if it takes her a year or two years. She promised me.’ With that in mind, Weed began to sculpt deep inside the dungeon.

‘Even if she never returns, I will leave my memory here. To show that at least one person remembers her...’

After his Sculpting Skill had reached Intermediate level, he could use Zahab's sculpting knife to cut boulders. Of course, that was

only possible using Sculpting Blade. The sculpting knife danced and two human figures were etched onto the rocky walls.

Weed moved boulders to the places where they had shared their meals and rested, and made pairs of sculptures out of them. Sometimes he etched drawings on the walls. Monsters would occasionally pester him, but Weed sculpted persistently.

His last piece was in the Cave of Dead Warriors where they had met each other for the first time: the cavern with the underground river flowing through it. The sleeping Da'in, and Weed finding her. A sculpture of them stood where they had shared their first memories.

Ting

Statue Completed: Nameless Sculptures of Lavi (Fine):

Mysterious sculptures have appeared all over Lavi!

These sculptures of treasured memories will become sanctuaries and guides in these dangerous dungeons. The mysterious statues were made by an anonymous sculptor.

Artistic value: 300

Special Effects:

+25% Increased health and mana regeneration.

+10% Increased movement speed.

-5% Penalty to Monsters' Attacks.

These effects do not stack with other statues.

Number of Fine pieces created: 2

Level Up: Sculpting Skill (Intermediate Lv: 2 | 0%):

Your sculptures will become more detailed and delicate.

Fame has risen by 20 points (+20 FAME)

Art has risen by 20 points (+20 ART)

Perseverance has risen by 20 points (+20 PER)

Vitality has risen by 10 points (+10 VIT)

Chapter 8: The Lost Treasure Of Freya

“Huhuhuhu.”

Weed perched atop a hill overlooking all of Lavias, and laughed in satisfaction as his cape danced in the wind. Hunting had raised his level to 175.

Ting

Item: Gray Cape of the Dead:

Durability: 20/20

Defense: 12

The tattered cape of a skeletal warrior. Still provides some protection despite its poor condition.

Restriction:

Level 150

150 Strength

Equipped:

Increases speed when traveling long distances.

Ting

Item: Graham’s Steel Belt:

Durability: 25/25

Defense: 7

Has 10 quick slots for small items such as daggers, potions, antidotes, etc.

Restriction:

Level 110

200 Strength

Equipped:

Quick slots for potions and antidotes automatically refill from inventory.

Ting

Item: Graham’s Leather Armor:

Durability: 30/30

Defense: 25

Light and hard, yet sturdy, armor infused with the soul of the Skeleton Knight Graham.

Restriction:

Level 130

300 Strength

Equipped:

+20% chance to evade magical or ranged attacks

+20 Strength

+5 Agility

From fighting the undead, Weed received boots, gloves, and even rings. For every 30 Skeleton Knights he killed, he received Farrot's Ring, which improved mana regeneration by 10%.

Since Royal Road allowed players to equip rings on 8 fingers, and even allowed multiple on the same hand so long as they did not have opposing attributes. Weed had persevered until he had a copy of the ring on each finger.

The rings now increased his mana recovery rate by 80%, showing how many Skeleton Knights he had killed.

Weed camped spawns and mercilessly slaughtered any monsters that gave significant rewards in experience or items.

The powerful Skeleton Knights of Memphis Hall were simply no match for Weed.

With his new rings, he could use the Imperial Formless Sword Technique nearly twice as often, and his other equipment further improved his effectiveness. Thanks to the new sword, rings, and other equipment, Weed finally looked like a respectable adventurer.

‘I feel like I’m flying with the wind. This freedom. This solitude!’ With his arms spread wide, Weed enjoyed the gusts of wind playing across his cape. But the world didn’t let him relax.

Ting

The durability of your cape has been reduced

Undead. None of their drops were normal. The items degraded quickly, even when not in use, and tended to have low maximum durability. Thus, although Weed looked great wearing all his items, appearances were deceiving.

Weed quietly untied his cape and put it down before him, then struck it saying, “Repair!” This action was sufficient for the task. After he tied his cape, Weed felt the wind once more, as if nothing had happened...

He had enjoyed this feeling in Continent of Magick. The

aftertaste of clearing a dungeon; savoring the results of his own artistry. Now it was time to leave it all behind and continue onwards...

...Then a sudden gust pelted his armor with small pebbles.

Ting

The durability of your armor has been reduced

It was the rare leather armor obtained from the Skeleton Knight called Graham. An item incomparable with newbie armor! Even better, it hadn't cost him a single coin!

“Repair!”

Unfortunately, Weed was forced to constantly use his Repair skill as he returned to Lavias. Equipment with low durability was very fragile; so he might have looked quite dashing when fighting monsters, but in truth he was paranoid about damaging his items. Due to his inherent need to recycle, Weed persistently used these items, which others would have discarded or sold at a cheap price.

Indeed, it was the greatest sign of poverty. However, this kind of

life would end soon: Once he attained Intermediate Repair skill, he would be able to restore any losses to maximum durability. Then he could pose without feeling restless.

“Do you believe in destiny? It doesn’t seem like saving our town and us along with it, was a mere coincidence.”

“Huh?”

“A while back, a priest of the Order of Freya had come to warn us of evil armies on the rise. They exert their influence in places in the lower, colder, and darker reaches of this world. The priest told me that only a truly courageous champion can stop them! Then he gave me the authority to choose that champion.”

“.....”

“I didn’t understand what he meant at the time, but now I do. There is a secret I didn’t tell you: the seed that has been passed down in our family serves to guide one to a new place.

“The priest said that to find Freya’s lost treasure, one should seek out Seagull. Please become a hero who defeats evil!”

Ting

Obtained information regarding the Lost Treasure of Freya

Weed had not forgotten the clue he'd received from the Elder of Baran Village, Ghandilva.

‘I need to find Seagull and discover the Lost Treasure of Freya!’

This was definitely a chain quest and smelled of large rewards. Most quests from temples were difficult to obtain but were very rewarding, since temples and palaces could only be entered by those with fame over ten thousand.

‘I will find Seagull!’

Although Weed knew every area in Lavias, he had never encountered anyone named Seagull. He tried asking everyone he met for information, but received no response. Only when he talked about the Lost Treasure of Freya did he finally get some answers.

“Seagull? Of course I know him. He’s a Herbalist who goes into dangerous dungeons without a second thought and has courage enough to face the undead.”

“You didn’t know? All the herbs sold in the shops are from Seagull.”

Each Avian provided some information about Seagull, but not his location. Weed headed to the market and inquired further.

“You want to know where Seagull is? He might be in Barkhan’s Crypt.”

“Barkhan’s Crypt?”

“That place always echoes with the screams of ghosts. We tried to subdue them, but failed, since they have no physical bodies. I wouldn’t recommend going there, but I won’t stop you either. The entrance to the crypt is on the mountain behind the city. Look for a patch of blue flowers near the fifteenth large boulder.”

Once prepared, Weed enthusiastically departed the city, in search of Barkhan’s Crypt.

‘Great. Such helpful directions’ he thought sarcastically. Weed sighed at the ridiculous situation. Avians could fly, so when going outside the city, they took to the skies.

Their eyesight was also remarkably good; so good infact, that they could even see the bugs crawling on the ground.

The Avian’s directions, therefore, made no sense from a human perspective. The fifteenth large boulder on the mountain...

What does that even mean?! Damn birds!

He couldn't see all the boulders at once, since he was on his feet. In the end, he simply searched around every suitably large rock.

To make matters worse, when he did located the blue flowers he was supposed to find, they were hidden by tall grasses!

Nonetheless, after a long, persistent and painstakingly thorough search, he finally managed to find the entrance.

There was a small building accessed by a steel gate. That was all. The rest was underground. A crooked, poorly maintained sign bore the following message:

Ting

The dead.

Those whose blood and flesh has rotted away.

Those whose mortal bodies exist no longer.

This grave be for them.

After taking a quick glance, Weed pushed open the steel gate and entered with an emotionless face.

Ting

New Dungeon: You are the first to discover Barkhan's Crypt:

Benefits:

Fame increased by 200 (+200 FAME).

Double experience and 2x normal item drop rate.

The first monster killed will drop the best quality item it can drop.

Before coming here, he had gathered some information from Avians about this place. He only knew that Barkhan's Crypt contained Spirits, Ghosts, and Specters of level 130. Spirits were souls bound to the world with wicked desires. Ghosts were just blurry apparitions.

‘This place is weaker than I expected.’

Weed slowly looked around the graveyard.

Ghosts and Specters came out sometimes, but he simply ignored them, and they left without bothering him. The cause was the killing intent emanating from Weed, which was an effect of the Fighting Spirit stat.

Fighting Spirit:

You can call on superhuman strength temporarily, or bring weaker monsters to their knees with your force of will from your eyes alone. You are prohibited from distributing any bonus points to this stat, and it will rise spontaneously, depending on the avatar’s action, or especially if you're fight monsters for a long time, or often confront monsters stronger than your current level.

Fighting Spirit for most warrior-type players was usually about 20 to 30. Close-quarters fighters like Monks or Assassins might have had a bit more, but it was rare to see anyone with over 50 points in the stat.

Though there were numerous comments and analyses regarding the Fighting Spirit stat, most concluded it was useless. Unlike Strength or Agility, increases to Fighting Spirit didn't show any obvious effects.

Many intelligence-based characters like Mages didn't possess the stat at all, yet had no more difficulty in hunting.

Although some players worked to achieve a high Fighting Spirit stat, they all had to raise their characters with that goal from the beginning. In other words, it didn't have much effect.

Though Fighting Spirit increased automatically, it wasn't easy to improve. Even killing tough opponents with every ounce of strength was often insufficient to raise the stat by a single point. Additionally, the stat decreased whenever one died or fled from combat. Thus, there were very few people who possessed a high Fighting Spirit stat.

Weed's Fighting Spirit stat, however, was 193; addition of the 35 bonus points from the L. Moonlight Sculptor class, which made it 228. Since he fought against stronger opponents like crazy, the stat grew immensely. Monsters of the same level no longer tried to fight him. If Weed engaged first, the monster would fight, but in a severely weakened state due to the force of the killing intent.

Weed wandered through the maze-like crypt, warding away monsters with a mere glance. After searching extensively, he spotted a wounded Avian.

“Damn...!”

Weed hurriedly approached the Avian, whose body was covered with scars and feverish from poison.

“Bandage!”

He put some herbs over the wounds and bandaged them. If it was very near death, he would have needed a potion, but for normal injuries, the Bandage skill was sufficient. After attending to its injuries, Weed gave the Avian a potion.

“Uhh...”

After a while, the Avian woke up, shaking its head.

“I... I passed out. I was so injured that I couldn’t do anything and almost died here. Anyhow, who might you be?”

“I’m Weed.”

“Weed? You must be the human who came to Lavias. My name is Seagull.”

Seagull! Finally, Weed had found Seagull. “Yes. I’ve noticed. But where is the Lost Treasure of Freya?”

“The Treasure of Freya? How did you learn of it?”

“Well, in truth...”

Seagull listened with a pained expression as Weed told him what had transpired in Baran Village.

cough

“You’ve done great work. May Freya be with you. The Lost Treasure of Freya is here, in Barkhan’s Crypt.”

Weed nodded. He had read something similar in the history of the Versailles Continent on Royal Road’s homepage. ‘Barkhan referred to him, didn’t it?’ Barkhan Demoph was a dark mage who mastered necromancy. He sought immortality and kidnapped many children for experimentation. Although his search for immortality ended in failure, he plotted a conquest with an army of undead.

His army seemed invincible. Barkhan’s necromancy allowed him to constantly expand his army as the battle progressed, providing an obvious advantage. His undead horde consisted of several thousand Zombies, Skeletons, and Dullahans led by Death Knights and fouler creations that could only be the stuff of nightmares.

Only after kingdoms from all over the world united their strength were they successful in putting an end to Barkhan’s menace. Weed learned of this after coming to Lavias. Indeed, the

City of Heaven had been built to isolate the undead.

“Would you retrieve the Lost Treasure of Freya from Barkhan’s servants?”

Ting

Quest: The Stolen Treasure of Freya:

In the time of chaos, when dark magicians made contracts with demons and killed thousands, the continent was soaked with blood in a war between mad kings. Holy influence declined and the world descended into anarchy. Those with strength flaunted it while fools who held swords upside down and those with light lips gained power. The deceased could not gain eternal peace, and the living writhed in pain and despair. It was at this time that the Treasure of Freya was stolen.

Difficulty: C

Penalty if Refused:

-100 Fame.

Relationship with the Order of Freya becomes sour.

Weed paused for a moment, and then nodded.

“I will retrieve the Lost Treasure of Freya.”

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

“Thank you. According to what I’ve heard, the Holy Grail will be guarded by a Death Knight. I will wait here while I recover from my injuries. Please return the treasure to its rightful owner.”

“I will.”

Weed passed Seagull and ventured deep into the crypts.

Even against Death Knights, Weed couldn’t feel much tension anymore. After Dullahans became too easy for him, he stopped avoiding Death Knights and fought them instead.

In his first battle against a Death Knight, he failed to block its

attack, and died. The penalty was a 24-hour ban on logging in. Additionally, his level decreased and his Skill Mastery was reduced by 5% on all skills. Raising his level again would be easy enough, but the lost Skill Mastery was fatal. Crafting skills like Sculpting or Cooking were difficult to improve.

Thankfully, there was no one around to steal his items.

In this matter, however, Weed was very stubborn. He actively avoided Death Knights, but when he met one accidentally, he stayed and fought. In the end... he died five times. Five days banned from Royal Road, decreased levels, and 25% reduction in skills!

After that, he increased his level and gained experience until he was able to fight Death Knights equally. Of course, the level gain was important, but he thought the experience of fighting stronger monsters was more valuable. If he didn't think like that, he would have gone crazy with regret over his losses. If not for the Death Knights, he could have had 10 more levels. He felt miserable about the days he couldn't log in during the double experience and item window.

With his uniquely high stats, Weed could fight against Death Knights at level 115. He always enjoyed fighting stronger opponents. Normally, the Sculptor class was a support class, for which it would be normal to be weaker than warrior classes, but the Moonlight Sculptor provided many strong advantages for combat. Craftsmanship, strengthened abilities, additional stats, and Sculpting Blade! It was an ideal job with nothing to complain about. In dungeons or on dark nights, it strengthened his abilities

by a further 30%, so monsters of equivalent level were easy prey.

Ghosts and Specters wandered around, tempting him with experience points and items. However, he ignored them and concentrated on finding Death Knights. This was very unlike Weed, who normally cleared out any dungeons he encountered without exception. Weed had double the experience point and item drop rate, but he just let Spirits and Specters leave.

‘No need to fight them now.’ Weed was waiting for tougher prey: Death Knights.

However, they rarely dropped useful items, and the few remaining Death Knights were difficult to find. The one guarding the Lost Treasure would undoubtedly be stronger than any others, so he was Weed’s target.

Weed was the first discoverer of the dungeon. On the first kill, the best item that a monster could drop would come out. Now, Weed could afford the luxury to exploit such an advantage.

Ghosts, Specters, and Spirits trailed behind him as he searched Barkhan’s Crypt, creating an eerie sight. It was deep underground that Weed finally encountered the Death Knight.

“Kuku, Si...silly human. Di...did you come here to di...die?”

Weed stared at the Death Knight expressionlessly. The Death Knight wore a cape, sword, and helmet over his bony body. His

shining silver helmet seemed like a very rare item.

‘Th...That’ll be a very big catch!’

Weed smiled. Incidentally, he had no helmet of his own, and now he could finally get one.

Helain’s Grail, which was evidently the Lost Treasure of Freya, was enshrined behind the Death Knight. It was definitely a unique item, for it shone with a bright light even in the depths of the dark dungeon.

“Hyaaa!” Weed charged toward the Death Knight without warning. At such an opportune time when experience points and item drop rates were doubled, he didn’t have time to spare.

“Sculpting Blade!” Weed started off with his signature move, known to be lethal to the undead.

The Death Knight raised his sword, now writhing with a dark aura, and attacked. Sculpting Blade clashed against the Death Knight’s strike, sending shocks through both combatants.

Just as he felt the impact, Weed jumped while holding his sword against the Death Knight’s, and landed a kick to his skull.

“Kuk!”

While the Death Knight staggered back a step, Weed quickly took two steps toward him.

Between enemies, there was no need to exchange pleasantries, only attacks with killing intent. With only an arm's length between them, they fought. This was an advantageous distance for Weed: although the danger increased with proximity, for Weed, who could react only by reading the Death Knight's shoulder movements, this was safer. If the Death Knight, at a level of over 200, used his attack skills, things would get difficult.

“Die, human!”

The Death Knight swung his sword in excitement.

Weed welcomed the attack while keeping it away from his vitals. Pain rushed through him, and filled him with the ecstasy of battle! He could feel the tension in the atmosphere, the killer intent and enmity emitting from Death Knight. He endured the attacks from the enemy, fought head-on, in order to crush him. A lion would never underestimate its prey, even if it's a rabbit.

It would bide its time, the second the rabbit moves, it would pounce.

Ting

Perseverance has risen by 1 point (+1 PER)

The reward for taking an enemy's attack, and enduring all the pain, was this. Weed took hits in almost all his battles; the result was tremendous defense from an amazing Perseverance. When he fought enemies of higher levels, the stat rose even faster. While increasing his level was important, improving his stats was even more so.

After each battle, his Bandage skill also improved quickly. If one thought of investment as a waste, he could not gain anything in his entire life. The lower the level, the more an investment in Bandage is necessary. When Weed had 205 health points left, he started to attack seriously.

He dodged the Death Knight's attack in close quarters, confusing the enemy by moving left and then right. Then, with fierce attacks, he defeated the Death Knight.

“Ku...uk.”

The Death Knight who had been fighting with excitement now felt the pressure of Weed's amazing Fighting Spirit, and thanks to his fabulous sword skill, the Death Knight was easily defeated.

“Now Death Knights are getting boring,” Weed muttered as he sheathed his Clay Sword. He had defeated Death Knights at level

125, so by now it felt a bit boring to fight them.

The one he'd just fought was about twice as strong as most of the others, perhaps because he was Barkhan's servant. Otherwise, Weed would have taken a few more hits before starting to fight seriously.

Even so he couldn't feel much threat to his life. Many people thought fighting in close quarters was dangerous, but looking the enemy in the eyes and feeling his killing intent during battle was invigorating.

The enemy's breath had to be felt. Although Weed was holding a sword, he fought at a much closer distance than normal. If one acclimated to fighting in close proximity, fighting at longer distances became a walk in the park.

Even if the Death Knight had used its skills and fought with all its might, there would have been very little difference. However, if Weed allowed huge blows, there was a risk of having his armor broken and his Perseverance wouldn't rise as quickly, therefore, he fought up close.

“Repair!”

Weed took off his equipment and struck them with a hammer. Armor and other equipment that had been about to break was quickly restored to maximum condition.

Unfortunately, his Repair skill was still only level 8, so it only looked as good as new: the durability of each item was at its minimum. If other people wore this kind of equipment and fought, it would have broken even before the duel ended. Wearing such equipment would have been impossible without painstaking care, akin to handling a very old car.

The Repair skill increased in level quicker than Sculpting or Cooking because it was a sub-skill, not a main skill. It was a sub-skill related to Blacksmith, so it had a fast growth rate.

On the other hand, he could do Sculpting anywhere, Cooking increased due to the Art stat and hard work, but Repair could not be improved without broken weapons or equipment. To Weed who hunted alone in Lavias, Repair was something that couldn't be improved easily.

Weed checked the loot from the Death Knight.

Ting

Item: Van Hawk's Magic Helm:

Durability: 90/90

Defense: 25

Helmet worn by a Death Knight. It's dome-shaped and covers the head completely; offers great defense. Van Hawk's strength is contained within.

Restrictions:

Level 200

400 Strength

Equipped:

+30 Strength

+10 Agility

+15 Vitality

+10 Intelligence

+15 Resistance to dark magic

+10 Affinity with undead

Allows you to command undead of up to level 50.

The rank and number of undead commanded will depend on Charisma.

Ting

Item: Kalamorian Sword:

Durability: 65/65

Damage: 35-40

Used by a knight of the Kalmor Empire – Van Hawk.

Personally presented by Emperor Theodore to honor Van Hawk on the 651st year of the empire. Conveys a fierce spirit and an air of nobility.

Restrictions:

Level 200

300 Fighting Spirit

May only be wielded by Knights

Equipped:

+20 Strength

+10 Nobility

+10 Elegance

+10 Loyalty

+30 Fame

Ting

Item: Crimson Necklace of Life:

Durability: 50/50

Manufactured with ancient dark magic. Contains mysterious strength.

Created by undead ruler Barkhan for his servants.

Restrictions:

Unknown

Effects:

Unknown

Weed took a huge breath.

“This... this is a big catch.”

In the first hunt, he received the best items the monster could give. But they were too good.

Van Hawk’s Magic Helm— Van Hawk was most likely the Death Knight’s name.

The items, with their excellent defense and effects, exceeded his expectations. Kalamor’s Sword had way better attack than his Clay Sword.

There was no additional frost damage, but it was a great sword used mainly by knights.

Right that was the problem: this sword was a Knight’s sword. Weed, who was a Sculptor, couldn’t use it. Of course, if he truly wanted to, there was an easy way to equip it: he could go to an empire or a kingdom, pass a test, pay a fee, and become a certified knight.

Unlike swordsmen, who had to undergo a second trial to be a Knight, he merely had to go get a license. If he did that, he could use this sword. However, he couldn’t use these items now anyway because of the level limitation.

“Identify”

You have failed Identify the Item!

“Identify”

You have failed Identify the Item!

The Crimson Necklace of Life couldn't be identified despite several tries to identify it; his Identification skill level was simply too low.

“Well, I can't do anything if this is my luck.”

He collected all the loot and went for the Grail, which rested on an altar. It was made of gold, and when Weed's hand touched it, it shone brightly.

‘It's hot!’ Weed's hand felt as if it was on fire.

He could feel the Holy power wrapping around him strongly. His scars from battling the Death Knight a few moments ago were healed completely; his fatigue vanished as well...

Ting

Item: The Church of Freya's Treasure: Helain's Grail has been

recovered!

The light from Helain's Grail slowly dimmed, leaving behind a pure, clean feeling. Weed examined the grail, full of curiosity.

“Identify”

Item: Helain's Grail:

Durability: Infinite.

One of the three holy items bestowed by the Goddess Freya. A symbol of the goddess' beauty and abundance. Gives infinite strength to those with strong belief. Turns water into Holy Water after a day. Holy Water is lethal to the undead. If spread on soil, will bring a plentiful harvest.

Restrictions:

Class related to clergy, or those accepted by the Order of Freya.

900 Faith

Effects:

+100 Faith.

+300 Fame.

Generates Holy Water.

An item that infinitely generates Holy Water... as expected of a holy item of the Freya religion, it was a priceless treasure. When the Holy Water was used on soil, that year's harvest increased by tenfold. To the undead, it was the most lethal of weapons. Only classes related to the clergy could use it, leaving Weed slightly disappointed.

‘Not bad.’

Weed repaired his sword, ready to continue to hunt the Spirits and Ghosts he had simply passed without a second thought.

The double experience point and item drop rate would last exactly one week in Barkhan's Crypt; he couldn't miss such a golden opportunity.

Just then, he heard a voice... “Hurry. Wake up, Oppa.”

The only one who would refer to Weed as “Oppa”, was his younger sister, Hayan. She was calling Weed through the microphone attached to the game capsule.

‘Hah... Now of all times...’

Weed looked around and logged out.

Chapter 9: Princess' Knight

“Yes. The next segment of our program is about the famous player in Tor Kingdom who’s all a buzz amongst users these days. Mr. Oh, I hear there’s now a blacksmith who can enhance the defense of your equipment?”

“Yes, that’s right. A fighter will always have some regrets and aspirations. Equipping gear with high defense will increase your chance of survival and the Blacksmith of Tor can increase this defense by smelting it with enhancing minerals.”

There were many television programs related to Royal Road, drawing on the many wonders and legends of the Versailles Continent. Viewership increased in parallel with the influx of players, leading to enormous advertising revenues.

“Hmm, a Blacksmith?”

Lee Hyun was sitting in his room, watching a TV show on Royal Road. A female host and a male host were talking to each other in turns, and Lee Hyun hoped to hear new information about the game. Although he could not be certain, many other viewers likely shared his objective.

The Versailles continent had no distinction between night and day; every hour was training hour. But when programs related to Royal Road aired, training grounds were less busy.

“Yes, that is amazing. Perhaps I should request an enhancement too. But wouldn’t the price be extremely high?”

“Yes. He charges anywhere from 10 to 100 gold depending on the effect or function. Isn’t that unbelievable?”

Shin Hye Min frowned. “100 gold? I wouldn’t be able to afford that even after gathering all of the money I have collected so far.”

“Haha, but that price is only for very, very good items, so he would probably enhance your items for around 10 gold.”

“That Blacksmith user will be filthy rich really soon.”

“That’s not exactly true. The prices of the materials needed for enhancing are pretty expensive, so he wouldn’t be able to get 20% profit for each enhancement. The reason for Tor’s Blacksmith becoming a hot topic is probably due to him being the first player ever to achieve intermediate level in the blacksmithing.”

“The achievement makes me jealous. A skilled sculptor appeared in Rosenheim Kingdom before, right?”

“Yes. Sculptors are very rare. It’s a rare job simply for what they do. The sculptures he made are said to be very beautiful.”

Rosenheim Kingdom’s sculptor was, of course, Lee Hyun’s game character, Weed.

“After I heard the rumor, I visited Rosenheim Kingdom to interview and purchase a sculpture to give it as a gift to you, Hye Min, but he had already left. I’m worried that he deleted his character after going through the difficult path of a sculptor.”

“Wow, that’s too bad. I lost my chance to receive a nice gift. I think artisans are starting to take their places.”

“Yes. The next news item is the one you’ve all been waiting for – the Britten Alliance civil war! Finally, Castle Odein, widely known to have been unconquerable, was invaded! Balkan guild is now in big, big trouble.”

The feed cut to an in-game video of Royal Road, showing a bird’s eye view of a grand brown castle, surrounded by 35 towers that could hold archers and mages in the case of war. The moat was filled with water and spanned multiple drawbridges. The castle walls, built with 3 layers of bricks, seemed impenetrable.

“Wow, amazing. It’s as if I am looking at a medieval castle.”

“Yes, this is Castle Odein which was owned by the Balkan guild. A fierce battle took place here last night.”

Castle Odein, drenched in the blood of countless users, has a very dark reputation. It levied exorbitant taxes and entrance fees! Nearby villages paid 60% tax on every sale, which is more than twice the rate in other municipalities. This applied to all items including medicine, potions, and herbs.

The anger of the users had reached its limit. To make matters worse, merchants traveling through the fort were charged 40% of their profits as customs tax. Castle Odein exploited its strategic location between the Britten Alliance and Aideren Kingdom to monopolize the international trade.

The money all went to Balkan guild, the owner of the castle. It was obvious why they were hated by others!

“But Castle Odein has never been taken over before, right?”

“Yes, that’s right. But this battle was just splendid. Watch this.”

The TV showed Castle Odein on a night with the moon hanging silently in the sky. In the field nearby, a horde of players were gathering. Standing next to their respective guild flags, they were waiting for the morning to come.

‘Just how many people were there?’ Lee Hyun was too astonished to speak.

He’d heard that the number of users playing Royal Road was increasing greatly, but this was just too much. Rivers of people covered the field in front of Castle Odein.

“The number of users gathered to conquer Castle Odein was over 30,000.” The male MC, Oh Joo Wan continued on as if he had read the viewers’ thoughts.

“30,000? That is the greatest number of people that has participated in a siege so far!”

“That’s correct. The desire to conquer Castle Odein was widespread. About 150 guilds united, and around 5,000 mercenaries had participated in this battle. We’ll view the scene now.”

Finally, the sun rose above Castle Odein. Some of the attackers gave long speeches about how they were righteous, and how they would deal with Castle Odein after they conquered it. With courage filling the air, the battle began.

It was a wondrous sight to behold: 30,000 soldiers attacking Castle Odein simultaneously. Arrows flew everywhere, and magic struck the fortress. Catapults constantly spewed boulders, and summoned golems attacked the stronghold. But the opposition still fought back, relying on the castle wall’s defensive capabilities.

Balkan guild had pulled their allied guilds into the war. There were also NPC soldiers in Castle Odein, further bolstering their defenses.

But the tide turned when the Special Forces, prepared for the worst, snuck in through the back. Each guild’s master and elites provided a diversion by assaulting the front, while the Special Forces infiltrated the castle through the sewers.

Grand sword auras rose and magic exploded everywhere.

“About half of the Britten Alliance Top 100 players are known to have participated in this battle. In the end, Castle Odein couldn’t resist any longer, and fell into the hands of the invaders.

Balkan’s guild members, who resisted to the end, were all killed. Their allied guilds had surrendered when the situation turned against them, ending the fierce battle. The invading guilds exulted in the overwhelming joy of victory.”

“Mr. Oh, will peace come to Castle Odein now?”

“I don’t think so. First of all, Balkan, who owned the fort, is unlikely to simply back off. They will be gathering their strength to take back what was theirs.”

“Another war will commence.”

“Yes, but even if Balkan’s attacks fail, Castle Odein seems like it won’t settle down for a while. Division of profits between the victorious guilds will not be settled easily. And considering the other advantages that Castle Odein grants, they’ll all be hungry for it. That’s how much value the land has. Balkan had invested a lot of money to stabilize the economy and the land. But they had to collect a lot of taxes for soldiers and fortifications, since other forces wanted the place.

“That’s a bad cycle to be stuck in.”

“Yes. Castle Odein, which stands in the middle of the two empires and functions as a relaying station, will continue to be in chaos.”

Lee Hyun smirked; a smirk that could make the most heinous villain envious.

‘The attackers had 30,000... At least 15,000 should have died. And about 10,000 from the defenders...’ Imagining the skills and levels that decreased was simply exhilarating to

Hyun. While others’ stats dropped, Lee Hyun was growing stronger.

Suddenly the phone rang, and he hurried to answer.

“Hello?”

“You ready?”

The person asking the question without any greeting was his sister, Lee Hayan.

“Yeah. I’m all dressed, and I washed my face.”

“Hair?”

“Of course I washed it.”

“It’s starting soon so you have to hurry.”

“Alright Hayan, I’m coming.” Lee Hyun turned off the television and rose from his seat.

He sighed. Lee Hyun was discontent. ‘What the hell am I doing...’

Dein High school. Even though he swore to himself that he would never return when he quit the school...

“Brother, you have to come!”

If Hayan hadn’t nagged in the morning, he never would’ve gone. He was threatened that if he didn’t go today, he shouldn’t dare to even think about going into the capsule for a while.

‘Does she even realize who I am trying to make money for...’

A high school festival. Others went with their parents, but Lee Hayan called her older brother.

“Ugh. Just what am I doing” Lee Hyun complained constantly. Even though he really didn’t want to go, when he thought of his disappointed sister, he had no choice. He felt like a cow being dragged to the butchers. Lee Hyun carelessly sat at the festival’s stands when he arrived. Students were divided into clubs or

grades, and were selling goods at shops but Lee Hyun ignored them.

“Hey, are you Lee Hyun by any chance?”

Lee Hyun turned to look towards the voice. A slim and pretty female university student wearing a purple skirt was standing there.

“Who are you?”

Her face showed disappointment at Lee Hyun’s words.

“Ah, I was right. It’s me, Junghee.”

“Oh.”

Her name and face were all that Hyun could remember.

Her pretty face had made her the object of many boys’ affections in high school.

‘She became more stylish, and her intelligent appearance probably makes her popular even now. University must be treating her well.’

That was all Hyun could remember. There weren’t any special

memories remaining.

“Was it Yoon Junghee? Long time no see. Why are you here when you’ve already graduated from this school?”

“Mmhm. My little sister goes to this school so I came. You?”

“Same.”

“You have a little sister. Can I sit beside you?”

“It’s an empty seat so do whatever you want,” Lee Hyun said grumpily and continued to watch the festival. A parody of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves was being performed.

An apple seller came out, danced, sung foolishly, and then spoke. “Oh!! Dear most beautiful queen. Here are some delicious apples. They are freshly picked from the apple farm so it is cheap and fresh! Only 2 thousand won for 5 apples!

The scrawny queen yawned and replied, “Why is it so expensive!”

“Because they’re ripe apples, my Queen!”

“Really? Then we can use these to kill Snow White, right?

”

“I believe I didn’t say such a thing yet?”

“CAN THEY KILL, OR NOT!?”

“If one tastes it, one won’t be able to escape its deliciousness, my queen.”

Nevertheless, the queen bought the apples. She walked up to Snow White, did some more useless dancing, and handed over the apple.

“Why didn’t you come to the Alumni celebration?” Yoon Junghee asked Lee Hyun, who was watching the musical with a cold expression.

Lee Hyun tersely replied without turning his head. “I didn’t feel like going.”

“Really? We hoped that we’d be able to see you there... After you quit school, we couldn’t contact you. Sanghoon said he would call you so we thought you’d be there.”

“Thanks for the kind lies.”

“No, really, I wanted to meet you again. Remember when you saved me before?”

“I saved you? Ah... right.”

When Lee Hyun was in grade 10, he delivered newspapers in the morning. Once he saw a girl being picked on by a few thugs at the park. Lee Hyun tried to just pass by. It wasn't any of his business, so he decided to ignore it. But hearing the girl's terrified screams, Lee Hyun ran back.

He beat up the thugs and saved the girl. Later on, he found out that she was Yoon Junghee that went to the same school as he did. He didn't know about her because she wasn't in his class, but they had ended up in the same class in 11th grade.

While they conversed, the musical had gone into a crazy direction. There was a bug in the apple that the merchant sold to the queen, so Snow White was beating him mercilessly. After she accidentally took a bite of the apple which had the bug inside, she fell to the ground. The dwarves discovered her, kidnapped her, and brought her to their house.

They were plotting to make Snow White cook their meals, wash their clothes, and clean the house! Snow White who soon woke up was at a loss. Why would a princess know how to do housework? When they told her to do the dishes she shattered them into pieces, and when they told her to clean, she broke apart the furniture and decorations.

Finally, when a prince came to take the princess, the seven dwarves cried in happiness, finally rid of the incompetent maid. It was a boring musical.

“... How disappointing” Lee Hyun thought that he had wasted his time. But Yoon Junghee who sat beside him was laughing endlessly.

“Hehehe. Look at that, Hyun. It’s really funny.”

He had no clue why she was calling him in such a friendly manner when he rarely saw her. As they spent their time like that, Hyun’s sister came. Lee Hayan was dressed in jeans and a white t-shirt instead of the school uniform. At that moment, Lee Hyun felt sparks of rivalry igniting between Hayan and Junghee.

“Why are you sitting beside my brother, old lady?” Hayan’s preemptive strike was sharp and filled with envy. A killer aura emanated from her.

At that moment, Lee Hyun felt that his sister was scarier than a death knight. But, a Dullahan was sitting right next to him.

“Old lady? Such a foul mouth you have for a child.”

“I’m not that much younger than you!”

“I am your brother’s classmate. I’d watch my mouth if I were you.” Junghee slowly put her hand on Lee Hyun’s shoulder.

“Hmph!”

Hayan walked over to Hyun, ignoring Junghee. “What are you doing here?”

“What do you mean what am I doing here? I am watching the festival.”

“Ugh, just hurry over here!” Hayan forcibly dragged Hyun up from the seat.

“Why?”

“There something I want to do with you!”

“What is it?”

“Just come here.”

Lee Hyun had to stand up. As he rose from his seat, Lee Hayan gave a nasty, victorious smile to Yoon Junghee. She took Hyun towards the school field, where there were many events and challenges set up.

Apparently, KMC Media had brought them for the school. They were broadcasting video of students avoiding various traps and clearing the missions. It was chaotic with a crowd of cameramen maneuvering around the mess of students rolling and jumping around.

Hayan took Lee Hyun and stood in front of one of the easiest challenges.

People had to tie one of their legs with that of another and run to the finish line at the signal of the referee.

“Why are we here?”

“You and I should run together. I really wanted to try the 3 legged race”

“Why would I do such a thing? Do it yourself.”

“I can’t do it unless it’s with you! I already told all my friends that I’ll be running with you. So you have to do this with me.”

Lee Hyun winced, but he couldn’t win against his sister’s obstinacy.

‘This probably won’t be televised.’

Lee Hyun glanced at the cameras with fearless eyes. Even though they were filming everywhere, not every single shot would be broadcast. Only the most epic failures would be edited to be aired.

Anyway, when KMC media broadcasts a school festival, the actual filming began at night when celebrities were visiting.

Celebrities going through tough obstacles were extremely popular amongst viewers. Students and normal people were nothing but bridesmaids for them. From Lee Hyun's twisted view, they were just beta testers for the safety of the celebrities.

Sexy female helpers in miniskirts were accepting the entry applications.

“Sigh. We'll participate.”

“It costs 10 thousand won to play.”

Lee Hyun shuddered, but reluctantly forked over the money out of his pocket. Even though this was a festival, the fee was way too much; it felt like a scam.

‘I guess I'm eating spinach and soy sauce for dinner tonight.’

Of course, for Hayan or grandma, he would cook up other delicious food for them, but he still had a tiny hope that his sister would eat a lot at the festival and come home stuffed.

“Now, get ready... Go!”

Twelve pairs raced at the same time.

At the bang of the gunshot, Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan began to run. Because it was a 3 legged race, they were getting tangled in

each other's feet and started to slow down. By the time they completed a third of the race, they were one of the slowest groups.

“Brother, try harder!”

“I am trying my best.”

“I’m telling you, do better!”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Because he was forced to participate, Lee Hyun wasn’t taking it seriously. As he watched the groups pass them, Hyun asked, “What’s so good about these games? All you get when you win first is a back full of sweat.”

“You didn’t know? First place gets a shopping mall gift card.”

“H-how much?”

“A 100 thousand won.”

Lee Hyun’s movement suddenly changed. He grabbed onto his sister, Hayan, and started to sprint. Lee Hyun zoomed through at an incredible speed.

A perfect motivation!

Originally, a 3 legged race requires both of the players' teamwork. Lee Hyun and Hayan cleared all obstacles at a blinding speed, passing all the competitors and took first place.

“Congratulations for winning.”

They won a 100 thousand won gift card from the hosts. Hyun could earn a few thousand won if he sold it online. Unfortunately, a team could not participate in an event again, so they couldn't make more money from the same race. Lee Hyun quickly searched for other games with prizes. His eyes were lit with life unlike a moment ago.

“Should we go try those?”

He pointed towards a set of facilities installed in the middle of the field.

It was called the Princess Set. The set had 3 parts: first you had to cross a moving, slippery log, second, you had to pop 50 water balloons flying at you, and third you had to climb a wall using a rope. One needed to clear the 3 stages and save the princess waiting for him in the prison. Of course, the princess was one of the participants.

It was a game where you must save your own princess. In Hyun's case, he had to save Hayan.

“That’s going to be pretty hard, will you be okay? Let’s just give up before you fall in the water and catch a cold, Hyun.”

Worry filled Hayan’s eyes. The high structures looked pretty dangerous, and you would be splashed with water when you fall down from the log. Many people were crowded in front of the site, cheering fiercely. Most of the cameras were focused on the Princess Set.

“Don’t worry. Just trust me.”

This was an event where you receive the prize depending on your record. The fastest person receives 3 million won and a 2 million won gift card. Because the school and the broadcasting company invested a lot in this event, the prizes were big. Lee Hyun paid 20 thousand won and registered.

He had to wait for a long time. There were many challengers for the event. More than 95% couldn’t rescue the princess and failed. Even if you did rescue the princess, the prize depends on your time, so there was a slim chance of winning.

Lee Hyun’s turn finally came after an hour wait. It was near the end of the festival, after all the applications for the events were over.

“Hyun, be careful so you don’t hurt yourself...”

“Yeah. Don’t worry and just wait for a bit. I’ll hurry to save you.”

Hayan went inside the prison. Soon, she was surrounded by her friends who made a lot of fuss.

“Is that person your older brother who you’re always talking about?”

“Yeah. Isn’t he good looking?”

“He’s just average...”

Her friends couldn’t hide their disappointment. Hayan’s sugarcoated depiction of Lee Hyun was very different from his real appearance.

“I really don’t understand how your brother is so great that you reject every guy that asks you out.”

“Yeah. The world is big and there are better people than your older brother.”

“You guys have no idea.”

Lee Hyun stood at the starting point. Two celebrity MCs, a man and a woman, approached him and pointed a microphone in his face. The guy was handsome and had a mature feeling to him, and the female MC was beautiful. He expected no less from a celebrity.

The male MC asked, “Why did you decide to participate in this game?”

“To save my one and only precious little sister,” Lee Hyun replied tersely. If he didn’t unlock the cage, it would move towards the water, and the bottom would suddenly open up. Hayan would fall into the water.

This time, the female MC asked a question. “Yes. You came to save your little sister. From the information I have just received, your sister is the prettiest student that has participated so far. Apparently she’s the school’s idol! I will be watching whether the beauty will fall in the water or be saved by the hero. It’s just my opinion, but I think the crowds would prefer to watch her fall into the water. Before you leave, please say a word of resolution!”

“I’ll try my best.”

Lee Hyun felt like other words were unnecessary. He would try his best, and win by all means. He would save his sister, and win 3 million won and the 2 million won gift card! That resolution was immeasurable.

The starting gun sounded, and Lee Hyun bolted forward with his animal-like instincts. He skipped over few obstacles that were there just for the looks and arrived at the first challenge.

It was single wooden bridge, with water surrounding it and Styrofoam logs rolling around place to place to impede advancement. High school girls fired water cannons from all

directions at the competitor.

The male MC was shooting out comments like a machine gun.

“The challenger has now arrived at the first challenge. I believe he is the fastest person to arrive at the first challenge so far, but it will be dangerous for him to rush because he might fall in the water! If he falls, he’ll be automatically disqualified. He needs to time his movements precisely.”

“Yeah!”

Hyun could hear neither the MC’s words nor the crowd’s screams. Even if he could, he wouldn’t have given a rat’s hat.

‘This is a game based on speed. I can’t be late.’ Lee Hyun’s eyes flashed sharply. He deftly jumped on to the bridge and started to run.

His hips, defined by strong and detailed muscles, prevented his body from shaking. Completely balanced, he ran as though the obstacle covered bridge was a flat plain. His body was very light and his feet dashed forward as though they were hovering; his steps looked like moves from Chinese martial arts.

The Styrofoam logs moved in a set pattern. Lee Hyun just proceeded on, as if the logs stepped aside for him.

“Fire!”

The high school girls shot water cannons, but most of the shots just splashed into empty space that Hyun had already passed. Lee Hyun cleared the bridge at the speed of light and arrived at the next challenge.

“Th-this is amazing. It’s the first time anyone has cleared the first challenge this fast. He’s running at an astonishing speed; it’s like we’re watching a circus act. What do you think, Ms. Ha? Ah, you’re too focused on watching.”

Ha Yejin was a rising star that was getting extremely popular of late. She was expensive to hire, so you could only usually see her in movies and commercials. But she was an alumnus of Dein High school. That’s why she was an MC for the event.

Ha Yejin just stared at Lee Hyun like a deer in headlights.

Water balloons were fired like cannons from machines.

Lee Hyun was in front of a tower of medium height.

He had to pop 50 water balloons!

You could only pass after popping at least a third of the 150 balloons that were shot. About half of the challengers failed in the first challenge and the other half failed in the second.

This was also a challenge where you could be subjected to embarrassment from situations like falling onto the sponge below from being hit by flying water balloons. Challengers needed to push their body to the limit in order to pop the water balloons that were continuously fired at them, so they tended to end up in silly positions. It was a challenge that guaranteed high numbers of viewers.

But the water balloons exploded near Lee Hyun. Water sprayed everywhere from the popped water balloons.

Lee Hyun's hands and feet moved like lightning as he demolished the balloons. People who have tried popping water balloons midair would know: this is not an easy task. Even though they were big in size and thus had a large surface to pop, they also spun towards the challenger so it was difficult to hit them without a high level of concentration.

The water balloons were shot by a machine and all had different trajectories. Some flew high, some low, and some flew far.

Even if you do succeed in popping a balloon, the water splashes at your eye, and people would start panicking at their loss of vision.

Things get even more difficult when the machine starts firing the balloons crazily. But Lee Hyun found order in the chaos of balloons and sharpened his senses.

When he reached his hands out to pop some balloons, the weight of his body shifted to the front. He balanced that weight by doing

graceful spin-kicks. His hands and feet flowed gently like water. At no time did he lose his balance, nor did he panic.

Lee Hyun did a flying triple kick, popping 3 water balloons before he dropped back to the ground.

His movements resembled dancing. He broke all the water balloons without missing a single one.

The MC's and the crowd were in awe.

“Oh, oh my god...!”

“This can't be happening...!”

“Who is that person?!”

The camera crew was busy broadcasting the moment on the screen, and the MC's were just staring with their mouths wide open from the shock, forgetting the commentary.

After popping the 50 water balloons faster than anyone else, Lee Hyun moved on to the next challenge.

The challenge was to climb over the 3 meter high boulder-like wall with a rope and landing on the other side. The sides were blocked by walls for safety, and one rope dangled at the front.

‘If it’s only this high...’ Lee Hyun charged at the wall, not reducing his speed.

“Ahhh!”

Even though it was a fake wall made of compressed Styrofoam, people screamed in fear at the reckless charge. It seemed as if he had no intention of grabbing the rope.

When Lee Hyun arrived at the wall, he threw himself up. He kicked at the side walls that were made for safety and continued to climb up. After jumping over the highest point of the wall with an elegant twirl, Lee Hyun continued to run straight ahead the moment he landed on the ground.

He could see his little sister trapped in the cage at the end of the game.

“I came to save you like I promised. I was a little late, right?”

Lee Hyun opened the cage door.

The school festival ended in a huge success. Due to the celebrities that arrived later in the day, the Princess Set was surrounded by hordes of viewers. Lee Hyun was also very happy about having come to the festival. Three million won of cash and 2 million won from a shopping center gift card! He was walking home quickly from all the excitement of making an unexpected 5 million won.

‘If I exchange the gift card for cash, I’ll be able to save a lot to help pay for Hayan’s university fees. But since it was won as a prize, should I buy grandma and Hayan some new clothes? The mall is too expensive so I’ll buy them at the market...’

While he was deep in thought, Hayan tugged on his shirt.

“Brother.”

“Hmm?”

“My leg hurts.”

“Really?”

It must’ve been tiring for her, since she had to follow Lee Hyun around the whole day and couldn’t enjoy the school festival.

Lee Hyun felt sorry for dragging his sister around to earn prize money.

“Then should we take a taxi home?”

Such a waste of good money on a taxi! He knew would have to pay above the basic fee since they were about 5 blocks away from home. Lee Hyun never rode a bus either when he went to school, but since he was so happy today, maybe it’d be okay to ride a taxi for once.

Of course, his chest was trembling. He had ridden in a taxi twice in his life, and he felt like it was a terrible waste of money both times.

Hayan shook her head at Lee Hyun.

“No. We’re not too far away from home, it’s ok.”

“Then do you want to take a rest? I’ll buy you a drink. You can’t drink coffee yet since you are too young...”

Hayan stuck out her tongue. “Psh, I’m a grown-up now.”

“In my eyes, you are still a child.”

“Jeez. Anyways, you haven’t had dinner yet. Let’s hurry home.”

“That’s... not true. I ate a lot of stuff here and there when I was viewing the festival.”

“Liar. I know that you’re not the type of person to buy that kind of food.”

There was no one who knew Lee Hyun better than Hayan. His frugal personality would never let him buy food from the expensive festival.

“Then what should we do? Would you like a piggyback ride?”

He said it like a joke, but Hayan smiled. “You read my mind!”

“Uh... Really? People will stare.”

“It’s ok. Hurry up and give me a piggyback ride. My legs hurt.”
Hayan started to whine.

Lee Hyun had no choice but to let her on his back. ‘It’s been such a long time, giving Hayan a piggyback ride.’

When their parents passed away, Hayan was in Grade 2.

Lee Hyun carried his crying sister to school when she didn’t want to go to school. He did this for about a year. After his parents’ death, they had to pay back the loans so they had to sell their house, and move around from place to place.

Because Hayan went to school like a good girl afterwards there was no reason to give her a piggyback ride, it had become a nostalgic memory now.

Due to other people giggling and staring at them, Lee Hayan held tightly onto Hyun’s body. “I’m heavy, right?”

“No, you need to eat more.”

Hayan's body was pretty skinny for her tall height. For Lee Hyun whose body was covered in muscles from various training, she was light as a feather.

Hayan asked curiously, "Will you give me a piggyback ride even if I become a pig?"

"Of course, I'd still give you one even if you were a hippo."

"I'm always forcing you to do favors, what should I do to repay you?"

"What favors... Just grow up faster and get married."

"I'll find a person who is rich and will die soon so I can repay everything that you and grandma have ever done for me."

"Even if it's a joke, don't say such things. Find someone who will make you happy. I'll live with grandma so don't worry about us, and you live your life doing whatever you want that makes you happy."

*

Festival Live!

Episode: Dein High School.

It received 10x more viewers than usual.

The man who cleared the Princess Set in the shortest time! The bridge crossing couldn't stop him, and he performed an astonishing feat at the balloon popping. He used martial arts that only people who are completely in control of their body could accomplish!

Viewers went wild at Lee Hyun's kicks.

He finished the final stage, climbing the wall with a rope with ease using his body's flexibility.

Though Lee Hyun only starred in the program for only 1-2 minutes, the effect was beyond imagination. His clips were all over the Internet, spread out on websites from other countries.

He had earned the nickname: The Princess' Knight!

Chapter 10: Mountains Of Loot

After he finished hunting in Barkhan's Crypt, Weed returned to Seagull with Helain's Grail in hand. Seagull had recovered and was digging out herbs.

"Ah, so you've finally came. What of my quest? Were you able retrieved the Lost Treasure of Freya?" Seagull bombarded Weed with questions one after another.

"Yes, here it is." Weed took out Helain's Grail and showed it to Seagull.

"Ohhh! Finally, this holy artifact can be returned to the Order of Freya. Thank you. To be honest, I didn't really expect much when I first saw you because of your low level ability, but you've truly done a great deed."

Ting

Quest Complete: Stolen Treasure of Freya:

The Order of Freya received a prophecy foretelling the coming of an age where Chaos would reign once more.

Hoping to alter destiny, the Order has raised gifted disciples and nurtured their talents. These holy knights and priests were tasked to retrieve the stolen holy treasures.

Seagull was ordered to retrieve Helain's Grail, but he failed where you succeeded.

Ting

Fame has risen by 200 points (+200 FAME)

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

As expected, the rewards were on different scale from other quests, since it was related to a temple.

200 Fame and a level gain of 2!

Yet, Seagull did not take Helain's Grail.

“I’m sorry to trouble you further, but could you take Helain’s Grail to the Order of Freya?”

“Me?”

“Yes. I could take it there, but the darkness is trying to rise once more. There have been signs of its attempts.”

“Signs... you mean...”

“This is only an unreliable rumor, but it seems Barkhan was attempting to unravel the secrets of immortality during the Last Battle. There is word that he’s trying to come back to life and form his army once more. Still, no one knows the location or size of his forces. I beg you; please take Helain’s Grail to the Order of Freya! I must prepare my fellow Avians for a possible attack and have no time to spare.”

Ting

Quest: Deliver Helain’s Grail:

Seagull is in a situation where he cannot travel to the City-State of Somre where the Order of Freya is based.

He has to prepare for Immortal Barkhan's return. You are the one whom Seagull trusts the most.

Difficulty: C

Quest requirement:

You need to finish mission within three months.

Reward:

Unknown

'It was a chain quest!'

“This task seems critical for the peace of the continent. I cannot find it in my heart to turn down this important request. I will return the treasure to the temple as soon as possible.”

Ting

Your party accepted the quest.

“Thank you!” Seagull flapped his wings happily.

No matter how much Seagull tried to move with dignity, he could not change the fact that he was a cute Avian with a cuddly appearance. In truth, Weed had to avert his eyes to avoid laughing at Seagull’s bright face and glistening eyes.

Still, he kept focused, planning on taking advantage of Seagull’s good mood. It was a chance for his specialty: flattering people to extract as much information as he possibly could. Weed’s instincts would not let him miss a single opportunity and here was a golden one.

“Seagull-nim, I have heard that you are the most renowned herbalist in Lavias.”

“Huh? Ah, I’m somewhat good at it, although you would not find a better looking, or cooler herbalist among the Avians.”

Praise delights any man, and it works especially well on the birdbrained Avians.

“So how do you tell the difference between herbs?”

“Ah? Do you wish to learn medical botany?”

“Yes. I want to learn everything Seagull-nim can teach me. After all, isn’t there meaning in everything a great person such as you do? The truth is, I want to follow in your footsteps and become a great sage like you.”

“I love the way you think. Of course it is important to be able to differentiate between the herbs, but the crucial factor is the way you dig them out from the ground.

You must not let the roots get damaged. Start by scooping out the surrounding dirt slowly and carefully...”

Ting

New Skill: Medical Botany

*

Weed hunted in Barkhan’s Crypt a little longer before setting out to return the grail to the Order of Freya. Regrettably, he did not finish hunting in Balog’s Ruin, Gahet’s Holy Place or Secmail’s Relics. But it was impossible to finish those all places by himself anyway. The weakest monsters in those hunting grounds were

Death Knights. The other monsters: Balogs, Succubi, Blood Ladies, and Blood Lords, were all monsters over level 400. They were far too strong even for Weed.

Those monsters noticed players instinctively, so he could not move around by hiding like he had been doing earlier to avoid Death Knights. But he was thinking of leaving Laviias anyway, so he did not mind too much.

“Welcome, human!”

The grocery store owner was an Avian Weed knew well, but Weed was still treated like a stranger due to the Avian’s exceptionally short memory.

“I want to buy two hundred Feathers of Lightness and one thousand Fruits of Heaven.”

The market owner was surprised.

“Ooh, it’ll be pretty expensive if you’re buying that much, is that alright?”

Because Laviias did not have many visitors, items were always overpriced. Simple items sold in grocery stores were at least four times as expensive as those sold in the Citadel of Serabourg. Neither did they have any weapons with good abilities for the price that was paid. Weed could not make use of most of the equipment, considering it was meant for the Avians.

Still, there were some items that were exclusive to Lavias. The Feather of Lightness and Fruit of Heaven belonged to that category.

Ting

Item: Feather of Lightness:

Durability: 1/1

Number of Uses: 1

Makes the body as light as a feather, so damage can be avoided when falling to the ground.

Price: 50 Silver

Ting

Item: Fruit of Heaven:

A sweet fruit only grown in Lavias. It is edible for upto 6 months after it is harvested.

It will greatly increase Intelligence and Luck Stat if used in cooking.

Price: 15 Silver

“Hmm... that would cost 250 gold, but I’ll charge 235 gold, just for you. Thank you for your patronage!”

The power of fame!

Weed had attained a fame level of over 1,200 by finding new dungeons and finishing maps. With that, even the shopkeeper’s attitude toward him had changed.

“Is there anything else you need?”

“Could I get some Avian eggs?”

“Our eggs? Why would you need those?”

Avian eggs were kept and incubated in a separate area, since the Avians laid an enormous number of eggs. In fact, there were Avians who laid an egg every day, so the quantity was unimaginable. Newly hatched Avians were no different from normal birds, but once they turned 10, they began to slowly gain the unique shape of an Avian. When they turned 30, they could speak, gain a higher level of intelligence, and begin to live in cities.

“I love nature as much as the Avians do, and I haven’t met a nobler race. If I had the chance, I would humbly accept to become their foster father.”

With that, Weed procured 300 Avian eggs.

He could feel his stomach rumble by simply looking at them. Needless to say, Weed had no intention of raising them.

Would I get a reward if I brought these back to their parents?

Unfortunately, Avians did not have a close relationship with their offspring. No matter who he brought them to, no one would give him a reward. Weed decided to cook the eggs and eat them. Each egg was not only delicious, but also conferred an increase in health and mana by 500, and a 2% improvement in Cooking skill.

There was one more place that Weed needed to visit before he left, The Beginner Training Hall. There was still some unfinished business, and it seemed impossible for him to ignore.

‘I will succeed this time.’ Weed thought determinedly.

Weed threw open the doors and proceeded inside the training center.

“Welcome!” The rooster-like Avian greeted Weed cheerfully. With his thick torso and powerful legs, the instructor looked quite peculiar for an Avian. The smile quickly abated though and was replaced with a solemn expression when the man recognized that it was Weed again.

“The look in your eyes tells me that you have gotten stronger. Still, I’ll warn you again: if you fail, you could die. Will you still take on this challenge?”

“Yes.” he replied simply.

Unable to resist the benefits of completing the challenge, Weed had chosen to take on the challenge again despite the danger. The instructor took him to the dark entrance that led only to a pitch black corridor, where one could not even see one’s own hands and feet. Here, one could only survive by utilizing all of their other sense; smell, hearing and their sense of touch.

“If you fail, I won’t come to save you this time. In that situation, you’ll probably die. If you want to leave a will, I’ll be happy to keep it for you.”

“If you want one, I’ll give it to you on my return.” Weed said

with a wry grin.

“Ambitious, I see. You may go inside.”

Weed entered the dark tunnel, his sword ready in hand. He had not walked far when...

Fwoosh!

At the distinct sound of a flying weapon, Weed dodged instinctively at the sound and counterattacked.

Clang!

The sounds of metal clashing. The brisk reaction of the wrist. The flow of the air currents.

Sparks flew with every strike of the sword, briefly illuminating the pitch black corridor. Weed struggled to see the vague silhouettes of his attackers, the engulfing darkness was drowning him in fear as the howling wind tore at him. Weed's level may have risen, but the Steel Barbarians' capability had also risen to match his. Their coordinated attacks hid their weaknesses and maximized their strengths. The relentless attacks gave him no room for thought and forced him to be on the defensive.

‘Dodge. Can't dodge. Hit. Miss.’

As soon as he chose which move to make, he was forced had to make another. The enemy attacked ceaselessly, limbs striking like lightning. As he overcame his fear of the enemy, his training kicked in and his body began to move on its own. He parried, dodged and countered the attacks with greater ferocity. In fact, he had improved to the stage where he occasionally had a free hand as he dealt with the ongoing blows.

Weed came to remember the feeling of popping balloons. Definitively, the danger was greater this time around, and the Steel Barbarians' speed was truly astonishing, but once he became accustomed to the initial shock, the rest came easily...

‘A pattern. There is a pattern in their movements. I must find the precise sequence.’

Weed began to match his movements with the Steel Barbarians' attacks, perfecting his own sequence of movements.

‘Water, I have to become fluid like water.’

Synchronized to the Barbarians' movements, Weed evolved from an impregnable wall to a maelstrom. As they fought, it felt like his heart was about to explode. As his blood surged, his destructive strength began to break them one by one.

Crack! Pop!

He was no longer afraid of the Steel Barbarians. They were no

longer a threat.

Within a span of 30 minutes, Weed had managed to destroy all one hundred Steel Barbarians. He collapsed onto the floor once he had finished this deed, his chest heaving from exhaustion.

“... Huff” He gasped for breath and tried to move but his aching muscles prevented him from doing so. His heart pounded wildly and his stamina had dropped dangerously low. He felt the biting pangs of hunger in his stomach.

The dark hallway lit up and the rooster-like instructor appeared.

The Avian’s face flickered with surprise as his gaze fell upon the remains of the Steel Barbarians.

“Amazing! You’re the first one to succeed in the second attempt here.”

Weed shakily stood up, needing to be supported by the instructor’s wings.

“Did I pass the Beginner Training Hall?”

“Of course!”

“If it’s not too much trouble, could you tell me how many people have passed this before me?”

“Here, you are the first. If you’re talking about the whole continent, you’re about the 400th.”

There were about 3,800 people who had passed the Basic Training Hall. They were the ones who had raised their stats by constantly hitting scarecrows for a month.

It was an impressive number, considering the sheer determination and willpower one required to accomplish such a task. Yet, the number who had passed the Beginner Training Hall was significantly less. This was possibly because there were many who couldn’t find a Beginner Training Hall, but the more likely reason was the difficulty of the test.

Instead of the mindless task of hitting a scarecrow for a month, to pass the Beginner Training Hall, one was required to understand the essence of fighting against groups.

This couldn’t be done by just anyone!

Even after repeated failures, few have the will to continue trying after dying dozens of times. That was the amount of perseverance it takes to pass the Basic Training Hall.

Of course, the reward was well suited to its level of difficulty and incredible risk.

“You have the potential to be a true fighter. Do you have any

intention of quitting your useless class and becoming a Master Fighter? You will be able to equip any weapons. Your punches and kicks will become stronger too. It is the secret class of a Martial Arts Practitioner.”

Ting

Class Change: Master Fighter (Hidden):

You will be able to use special skills related to this class.

You will be able to raise Weapon Mastery further. Attack and Vitality stats will also dramatically increase.

Do you wish to change your class?

Yes | No

Warning:

If you change your class, hidden class ‘Legendary Moonlight Sculptor’ will automatically disappear.

Only those who had an innate understanding of fighting could pass the Beginner Training Hall. Knight, Archer or any other job could have its level raised using Weapon Mastery. In addition, the ability to use any weapon and change them while fighting was a huge advantage.

Bows for long range attacks. Spears for facing cavalry, powerful axes... All of it would be at his immediate disposal.

The strength of attacks and his vitality would increase faster than with the other classes.

Master Fighter.

It was a reward offered only to those who had passed the Beginner Training Hall. Most people would choose to become a Master Fighter without hesitation.

But...

Weed did not have to think about his answer. Although he had acquired the Moonlight Sculptor class unintentionally and had many regrets initially, all of it was now in the past.

The charms and hidden advantages of the Sculptor class attracted him. Though he did not know how strong the Master Fighter class was, his resolution did not waver.

“I’ll keep my current class.”

Ting

You have declined the offer to change your class!

The instructor's face was tinged with disappointment.

“Very well. Here is another reward, based on your performance during the fight.” The instructor continued, “Also, you have a chance to attain a new skill. Whatever action you take, a skill will be created for you. Do as you wish.”

Weed fell deep into thought. A skill was not something that could be attained by effort alone, and so this opportunity should not be wasted.

‘What skill do I need?’ he wondered.

‘Sword fighting?’ No, he didn’t need it. He couldn’t even use his existing sword fighting skills to their full extent yet.

‘Footwork?’ So far, he only used special footwork when he was trying to reduce the distance between himself and his opponent in a long distance fight, or when dodging magic spells. His basic

instincts were more than adequate and so he didn't need that skill either.

Of course, when met with a highly skilled opponent, he would need to use footwork, but he could compensate with his other skills.

'Magic?' He couldn't learn it now, but when his Intelligence rises above 300, then he would be able to learn magic, regardless of his job. It was something to consider in the distant future.

'Holy Magic?' He didn't even give it a second thought. After much consideration, he decided to just do something random.

'Whatever I do, a skill suitable for me will be made.'

He could do anything he wanted, but with the stage set, he had no idea what to do. Weed stood there unmoving, while the instructor stared at him.

Weed suddenly felt uncertainty as he thought about leaving Lavias. Memories of the brief period he'd spent with Da'in inundated him all at once, the hunting grounds they had scoured, all the Skeleton Knights, Skeleton Mages, Soldiers, Dullahans, Death Knights, and Spirits they had fought and defeated together. He'd be leaving all of these behind with no chance of returning.

She might be not even be alive anymore. He still regretted not saying farewell to her in the end.

“Ahhh...” Weed opened his mouth and made a small sound. The shout steadily grew louder, until it reverberated through the whole cave.

“AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!”

(P/R: fu ro dah!!!)

This was a farewell to the Avians and his memories of Da’in. He released all of his repressed emotions all in one agonizing howl.

Ting

New Skill: Lion’s Roar:

It is a thunderous shout that will shake the heavens, and it is filled with the fighter’s Will.

Effect:

Allied army’s Fighting Spirit increases by 200%

For 5 minutes, leadership will be increased by 170%

Any confusion is cleared

New Stat: Leadership

*

Baran Village had prospered after the Lizardmen's defeat. Home to the epitome of abundance and beauty, the Statue of Goddess Freya drew visiting nobles and merchants from far and wide. Perhaps due to the statue's blessing, the town had not encountered further invasions from the monsters. Nobles would chat excitedly about the statue when they returned to their cities.

There was a small inscription by the Statue's feet, which most thought of as nonsense,

"Thought the sculpting level is low, I hope the finished product of the Freya's Statue will be accepted by all and praised for its beauty"

Baran was previously a small town despite the patronage of nobles, kings and merchants. But as users who hunted near Rosenheim Kingdom increased, their gradual southward migration in search of new hunting grounds and adventure rapidly increased the town's population.

The abundance of nearby dungeons coupled with the conference

of a 15% increase in the recovery rate of vitality and mana for a day on all those who laid eyes on the Statue of Goddess Freya, were key factors in attracting new residents.

“Was this great statue here before?”

“Who made this?” People were intrigued and amazed by the statue. Rumors spread that the mysterious sculptor was in the punitive force that helped liberate Baran.

Weed had become a celebrity.

The pure smile and face fresh like the morning dew captivated the masses. They could not bear not seeing it at least once a day. The square near the statue was filled with merchants hawking their wares and adventurers come to admire the statue.

“These are weapons sold in Citadel of Serabourg. Selling very cheaply at original price plus some transportation price.”

“Buying items. I’ll pay 10% more than the retail price.”

“Need fighters above level 100 damage dealers for hunting Salamanders and Werewolves. Rogues or Assassins are welcome too!”

“I’m looking for a party to hunt at Chalupan Valley or at least someone who would guide me there. I’m level 120 Ranger.”

“First time in Baran Town. Invite me to a party! Job is Bard. I’ll sing beautifully for the whole battle.”

Within the noisy, packed square, a hushed silence suddenly spread. This was because of a single merchant: Mapan.

He was level 70 merchant. Though only a beginner, he mainly delivered items over a long distance and transported items from the Citadel of Serabourge or nearby major cities to the rapidly growing Baran Town in need of resources. Customers flocked to him in an instant.

With a dream that he would one day rule Rosenheim Kingdom, Mapan worked hard to gain money. Gathering money little by little was the fun only merchants can savor. Mapan wheeled his wheelbarrow to a corner after selling off all his items and took a well-deserved stretch, looking towards the sky.

Something was falling from the sky.

“Hu...Huh? That...”

That something was a person.

“A-a-a person, a person is falling from the sky!” Mapan yelled with all the air in his lungs, pointing at the sky.

“What is he talking about?” Many dismissed it as nonsense, but some looked up to where Mapan pointed.

Someone really was falling from the sky! A person holding on to nine gigantic bags had appeared from above, hurtling towards the ground at a tremendous speed!

“Ahhhhh!”

“Run for your lives!”

In an instant, the square fell into chaos.

*

Whooooooooosssh!

Weed’s ears hurt because of the noise from the howling winds that were flowing around him at an insane speed. If he hit the ground at this velocity, every bone in his body would be broken and ground into dust, not to mention he’d end up as a gory pancake. Even hardened stone and huge boulders would be splintered and crushed to pieces if he landed on them.

Even in this seemingly perilous situation, Weed was calm. Squinting his eyes a bit, he looked at the ground to aim he decent.

‘A little bit to right...’

Weed adjusted his body accordingly and sped up towards the ground, seen as he wanted to arrive as soon as possible.

“Ahhhh!!”

“Run! Hurry!”

He could see people screaming and running helter skelter very clearly. Merchants jumped and abandoned their stalls as though a fire was burning them.

‘Were there always this many people in Baran Town?’ Weed thought idly.

Weed used ‘Feather of Lightness’ when he was about 500 m above the ground. His body, which had been free-falling at terminal velocity, was quickly slowed down, suddenly gaining a massive amount of air resistance to rapidly slow his descent. Only a small cloud of dust rose upon his landing. However, due to the weight of the nine gigantic bags that he carried, his feet plunged about 10 cm into the ground.

“.....”

“Who is he?”

“Is he a Mage?”

Users pointed at Weed completely dumbstruck from the event that they have just seen. Many users were already speculating the identity of the mysterious man who had fallen from the sky. Everyone's first suspicion was that he was a mage who used Flight magic. But Flight magic couldn't be used by just anyone. Only a mage with Five Circle Supporting Magic of over level 300 had the ability to do this.

A level 300 could be only seen as a top gamer in Royal Road. What sort of mage would appear like that, falling from the sky?

Because Weed had descended at such a ridiculous speed, he had attracted far more attention than he would normally have. Over a hundred users were currently staring at him as he surveyed the town.

Weed focused on a stand that did not close despite the chaos and looked at Mapan who was hiding behind the Freya Goddess Statue, peering back at Weed.

“Hey you.” Weed called out suddenly.

Mapan answered in surprise, “Ye-Yes?”

Weed said gently, “You look like a merchant, do you buy items?”

“Why, yes, of course!” Mapan hurriedly nodded as he scurried from behind the statue, afraid that Weed might change his mind.

Mapan was a businessman after all, and he specialized in trading with items.

After buying items at major cities cheaply and then using the ‘Trading’ Skill that only merchants could get, he sold them at a higher price in other stores. Merchants could earn a lot of experience points by buying at an extremely cheap price and selling at a much, much higher price.

Weed said in a laid-back voice, “How much would you pay for it?”

“If you sell to stores, the profit would be 2% of the original price. I could pay at least 15% more than the stores, and when in bulk, I’ll pay at 18% more. I would be buying with only 2% margin left for me.” Mapan replied wryly.

Weed looked around for someone who would suggest a better deal than Mapan, but no one else called out. The suggested price was a very honest price.

A Merchant’s trading skill depended on how quickly he could sell his merchandise. Mapan, who could leave a 2% margin, was considered as very highly skilled merchant. Weed decided to make a deal with him.

“If there’s any item you’re collecting, I’ll sell them to you separately.”

Mapan's jaw dropped.

'This person is a big catch!' Mapan thought excitedly.

How many items did he have to be able to say that he'd sell an item separately if there was any Mapan was collecting?

When selling items, it was much more beneficial to sell items in bulk.

"Anything. I sold all the items I had, so it was about time I bought some more." Mapan replied eagerly.

"Is that so?"

Weed flipped his bag upside-down and shook it. Out poured Dullahan's legs, Skeleton bone pieces, charcoal, tree stems, rusted short spears, bone clubs, and other items to no end. Suede Pants, golden strings, tunic cloth, and other such items flowed out freely as well. They all piled up until a small mountain had formed.

"H-How can this be!" Mapan's eyes couldn't get any wider.

'To be able to bring this many of items... Where did he go hunting?'

Logically, the enormous amount of items was impossible to get: these items could only be gathered through hunting, but this

amount was beyond anyone's capabilities.

Considering the fact that not many people had discovered Laviyas, Weed had gathered items in his secret hiding places throughout the dungeons. He couldn't sell at a good price if he sold them to stores in Laviyas. However, he would benefit much more from selling them to merchants who would buy such items at a higher price.

Profit!

Money!

Weed would never budge in this area. He would never throw away even an item worth just 1 copper.

"Th-This many items..." Mapan's eyes twitched slightly. He had never imagined that anyone could see such a sheer amount of items in a lifetime!

"How many will you buy?"

Mapan replied immediately, there was no need to even think about it, "I'll buy everything I can!"

159 gold was all the money that Mapan had. Merchants could only get money by selling items that they bought from other users, but due to fierce competition, prices were constantly raised, so getting a surplus was difficult.

“Then take it.”

The moment Weed gave his permission; Mapan began categorizing the items by their price. His abilities in item evaluation were used for moments like these, so assessing an item's value on the market took less than a second.

1 gold... 2 gold... the value rose quickly, and he had soon calculated that the mountain of equipment had a net worth of 157 gold.

The magic backpack, was able to be filled with ten times its volume and reduced the workload to carry it to a third, spilled out an avalanche of items.

“Th-then...” Mapan gave Weed a strained smile as he began to wobble off to his nearby store.

‘How heavy is it to cause...?’

‘I feel his pain...’

The crowd had begun to scatter, but the remaining spectators looked at Mapan with pity. Meanwhile, the other merchants' expressions were filled with bitter jealousy, since if they could sell that many items, they would definitely be able to significantly raise their level.

Following the wake of Baran's expansion, weapon stores and smithys were yet to be built. On the other hand, there were a variety of stores that bought and sold a plethora of different items.

"I'm grateful for your business! Since there is a lot, I'll give you 169 gold in this special case. Will you accept?"

"Thank you, sir!" Mapan was able to sell the items at the reasonable price of 169 gold by bargaining with the variety store owner. Mapan joyfully rushed out of the variety store.

"I have hurry and thank him!"

Since his level and proficiency rose greatly due to selling items in large quantities, Mapan ran to the town square in hope of at least giving thanks. Fortunately, Weed was still in the same place.

"Thank you! My name is Mapan. If you come by again, at any time..."

Just then, Weed opened another bag and turned it upside down. Suddenly, another pile of items poured out!

"Th-th-that's..." Mapan's gaze was frozen in place as he stared at the small mountain that had just formed in front of him. He was already dazzled from just one of the nine bags that Weed was carrying.

'... It can't be!' It was just as Mapan thought: all nine bags were

filled to the brim with various items.

Weed emptied out the other eight bags where he stood. Excluding the first bag, six bags were filled with minor items, while two bags were filled with weapons and armor. Together, the items were worth an astounding sum of one thousand gold. The last bag was filled with the Death Knight's armor and various ores that he had kept for when he became level 200. To date, he had collected 145 iron ores and 109 copper ores!

Once one's Repair skill reached the Intermediate level, one could learn the Blacksmith skill, so Weed was saving these ores until then.

"Please tell me just where you had such training!"

"You came from the sky, but how did you do it? Even a magician like me couldn't feel the flow of mana!"

"Could you give me some money?"

Users swarmed Weed.

In just a moment, he became a celebrity of Baran Village. However, soldiers that were protecting the village soon gathered around Weed.

"Is that you, Commander?"

“You guys...”

They were the soldiers from the Lair of Litvart: Hosram, Dale, and Becker.

“Ooh! So you’ve finally returned!”

The elder, Ghandilva and the other villagers had also came out to greet Weed. At the sight of the soldiers and villagers greeting Weed so openly and warmly, everyone’s curiosity was amplified. Who was this person who had literally fell from the sky and was getting all the NPC’s trust and respect?

Weed exchanged greetings with Ghandilva and the soldiers. Seeing the transformation Baran Village had gone through, he felt a surge of emotion.

‘To think that my sculpture would have this effect...’

Under the sleeve of the Statue of the Goddess Freya was an inscription that only Weed knew about. Every time he saw it, he became very anxious. If by some chance Seoyoon came by and discovered this, a clashing of swords was inevitable!

Thanks to the statues innate powers, the recovery speed of Health and Mana has risen by 15%. and these effects will last an entire day.

The Goddess statue didn't only affect Weed and other users, but it also gave similar results to NPCs. It gave a significant helping hand to the NPC soldiers when exterminating monsters and leveling up. If a Fine piece had this much affect, what would happen in a city with a Grand or Master Piece?

Statues could strengthen the military force of a city.

‘Sculpting could be an indescribable and amazing thing...’

While Weed was looking at the statue, lost in his thoughts, the merchant who bought his items, Mapan, had appeared.

“Excuse me... if it's not too much trouble, may I ask where your next destination will be?”

Mapan, thanks to Weed, had hit the jackpot. He had leveled up 14 times, and his Trade skill leveled up three times!

One could say it was a miracle for a merchant.

Shrugging, Weed answered, “I'm going to go past the Baruk Mountain Range.”

“The Baruk Mountain Range?”

“Yes. The place I am trying to reach is the Free City of Somre.”

The destination was where the Order of the Goddess Freya was based. Weed had to deliver the Helain's Grail. There were two ways to reach the Free City of Somre.

The more commonly used and safer route was to go back to Serabourg Castle, pass Brent Kingdom, and before passing Hilcos Badlands, go straight in the southwest direction. This was too complicated for Weed, for not only did it take three months just to get there, but one had to follow a trail.

It was far too boring for Weed, so instead he was planning to cross over the perilous Baruk Mountain Range and reach the Free City of Somre more quickly. Although the Baruk Mountain Range was infamous for its monsters, Weed had a secret weapon for emergencies, so he wasn't unconcerned.

"So you are." Mapan smiled.

"Could you take me with you? Oh, please don't misunderstand! By seeing the items you brought, I can tell that our levels are very different, but I am not trying to burden you. I know very well that Merchants are weak in combat," he explained.

Merchants were one of the weaker classes of the non-battle type classes. However, Sculptors were commonly known to be even weaker than Merchants, and currently, Mapan didn't know that Weed was a Sculptor.

What kind of Sculptor could kill a Death Knight or Dullahan? Furthermore, a Sculptor who had been searching for stronger

monsters because he got tired of hunting Death Knights, was unthinkable.

“Even if we make a party, not many experience points will come to me. I will even cover all the costs of the herbs and bandages used for battle.”

The largest part of Weed’s losses was due to buying herbs and bandages. Mapan the Merchant had said that he would take care of that part knowing that if he gives something, it would be reciprocated.

“What is it that you are after?”

“Items. If you choose to carry everything that drops, you’ll be restricted in more ways than one. The bags will become too heavy and you’ll be unable to fight, so I will buy it all. The items you would otherwise sell end up with me, and your burden will be lightened considerably.”

Mapan’s goal was high level items. Following a strong fighter would be a huge advantage for him. Just one item from a level 200 monster was ten times more valuable than items from level 50 monsters.

He wanted to get items while following Weed rather than waiting at a town. Since he could trade items at each town, it wasn’t bad business at all.

Weed considered it momentarily. It was a win-win situation if he took up the offer. His previous tactic of storing items in a hideout when he was hunting could only be used in Lavias which had no other users running around. If someone used that tactic on the mainland, others would steal his bounty and get away with no repercussions.

“Very well! Let’s travel together.”

Book 03: Battle Of The Black Castle

Chapter 1: My Profession, Moonlight Sculptor

Baran village was bustling at the seems with the drastically increased number of users visiting.

“Selling sculptures! Food for sale! Repairing low durability armor or weapons for a cheap price!”

“That sculpture, how much is it?”

“20 silver per piece! Is it expensive? Art is usually as expensive as it is pretty.”

Weed was the focus of explosive interest from female users! Each of the sculptures he made appeared almost alive. Most sculptures, especially the stone sculptures, were too large and couldn't be sold. So, in order to draw crowds, smaller models were produced. These were cute and extremely adorable, receiving the majority of attention from the female users.

Weed simultaneously cooked while selling sculptures. People gathered, attracted by the smell of the food being stirred and fried. People who came to buy sculptures were also enamoured by the smell of the cuisine.

“What are you cooking?”

“It’s poison.”

“Eek, poison? You’re making poison? Even though it’s emitting this delicious scent...”

“Yes, it’s poisonous because it’s so delicious that it’s worth dying twice for! Here’s a sample dish. Try a little bit!”

The users tasted Weed’s stew. He gave each a small spoonful.

First of all, the smell! The stew was made from boiling wild edible greens which were good for the body and it emitted a sweet fragrance. As soon as the stew entered the mouth, the eyes of the female users widened at the gently unraveling sweet flavor.

“Wow, it’s delicious! Oppa, can’t you buy me some?”

(PR: ‘Oppa’ is the respectful term used by females to call older males such as older male brother or friends in Korea)

“Yeah! Eat as much as you want. Since my Sena wants it so much... Mister, how much is it?”

“15 silvers.” Weed replied.

“Far too expensive for one dish, isn’t it?”

Many of the faces from the male users became distorted when they heard this. This was because 15 silvers was a significantly high price. However, Weed never compromised when it came to price. There was no room to compromise when it came to money.

“The reason I cook is to allow many people to eat more delicious food. But I feel that this road is not so easy. It seems maybe the dishes are too expensive since everyone seems to complain about it.”

“Well, of course it is!”

“I would like to sell it really cheap; however, the cost of ingredients for this is nearly 14 silvers. When you consider the cooking tools and all the effort I put in, I’m selling it for next to nothing. Sniffle. Should I give up my dream of cooking delicious food and use cheap ingredients to cook cheap food? It’s really a dilemma for me. Sniffle”

Weed cried contemptibly, it was all an act of course. Even if he was stabbed and bled, Weed wouldn’t shed a tear. This was an investment. An investment in ingredients for no cost!

“Oppa!” The investment paid off, the female user vehemently cried out.

“Let’s just buy his food! I mean, come on! He’s someone who cooks really well... After all, mom would say that cooking comes from the heart. Someone who makes food as delicious as this must be a really good person.”

“Yeah, yeah, I got it. Sorry about that Chef, I hope you sell a lot.”

The duo went and surprisingly paid 20 silvers. Neither of them asked for change. Weed’s expression changed to a smile of satisfaction.

‘Anything tastes good if you don’t know what good food is. Once again, money has been earned.’

Weed skillfully sold sculptures and food. In fact, the all up, the materials barely even cost 1 silver.

The wild greens were the cheapest ingredients from the market and the other ingredients weren’t that much more expensive. Since the market was in a mountain village and they didn’t have many things to sell, the prices for materials regarding food were very cheap. Even though the market didn’t have ingredients that the markets in the larger towns or cities had, with the large variety of ingredients, all kinds of dishes could be made.

“Mister! One bowl please.”

“Kimbab for us.”

(T/N: Kimbap: sushi like, but it uses different ingredients inside and the rice is mixed with sesame oil instead of vinegar)

“I came back again, hehe.”

There was no end to the customers. Due to Weed's cooking skills and sculpting skills being at the intermediate level, he was drawing in huge crowds. With the crowds growing by the hour, even his exaggeration grew, but Weed was someone who thought lies weren't lies if they were for business. Weed also made customers feel better with his thorough service. However, from time to time, there were of course customers that troubled him.

“Excuse me, I think I've seen you on television.”

Two women approached him, trying to view every aspect of Weed's face, and then they asked,

“You're the Princess Knight, aren't you?”

It was the nickname that he'd received after taking an active role in an event at Dein High School to get the top prize. Probably due to the news spreading rapidly throughout the internet, there were a lot of people who recognized him. Some may like to be really popular, but in Weed's case, it was different. Of the many nicknames he had, the nickname of Princess Knight was enormously embarrassing for him.

“Well, you see, I think you've got the wrong person.”

Weed turned his eyes away to avoid their attention. Weed's cooking was not only delicious, when eaten, it gave a significant

boost to the user's health and mana. Due to this reason, many people came to eat his cooking. The boost was so significant, to the extent that even hunting parties came and ate as a group.

“The price is 15 silvers. The price for the special nourishing meal for hunting is 30 silvers. Thank you. Have a pleasant hunt!”

Even though the price of the food and sculptures were high, Weed did offer to repair their low durability items for free as an extra service, so the price wasn't really a problem. Even though it was 30 silvers, for users who hunted in Baran village, it was an amount they could easily pay.

Food that raised health and mana was more than worth the amount they had to pay when hunting. Of course, there really were expensive dishes on the menu. There was a dish made by using an egg of the Avians and a fruit of heaven, that left a taste so delicious that you wouldn't even notice if someone had upped and died beside you.

Just counting the cost of ingredients, the fruit of heaven was 15 silvers and the egg of the Avians cost a whopping 95 silvers. However, the dish wasn't just an expensive dish, it was also difficult to cook. Health foods are not made with one main ingredient. A health food dish needed to neutralize the strong potency, while doubling the effect.

Just like when making ginseng chicken soup (samgyetang), ginseng, dates and other various medicinal herbs are used. The dish needs to bring out the flavour and maximize the effect of all its ingredients. These are the difficulties and hardships of a chef.

Thus, after several attempts and failures, the names of the dishes made with the egg of the Avians and the fruit of heaven were,

Wellbeing Royal Bud of the Day!

Sweet Nut & Bay Leaf.

The dish made using both of those ingredients had this name,

Main Nut on the Bird.

This dish brings out the effects of both the egg of the Avians and the fruit of heaven, which means it gives a significant boost to strength, intellect, luck, mana and health.

*

When Mapan joined Weed in Baran village, he had high expectations.

“Finally, my time as a tired and exhausted merchant will end! Now, it’s should be smooth sailing from here on out.”

One can say a merchant’s road is difficult. In Mapan’s mind, the memories of suffering flashed by.

“Whew, those were tough times...”

When he initially chose to be a merchant, he was filled with hopes and dreams. The Merchant class really struck Mapan’s fancy because, Money! Money was power! Money was fame!

The world, in the end, was dominated by money. He majored in economics, and he firmly believed that capitalism was not an ideology, but economics itself. To earn capital, he was prepared to endure some hardships.

It felt like all the money in the Versailles continent became his, and with it, he wanted to construct a large trading company to obtain a large amount of fame. In some kingdoms, it was said that peerage as a noble could be bought with enough money. In a word, he chose the road as a merchant to earn lots of money.

But what was this! From the beginning, the road to becoming a merchant was rough without equal. Since he was not allowed out of the city for four weeks, he ran errands. He worked diligently in hotels, weapon stores, and exchanges, to save a small sum of money. Everything was for the Merchant class quest. Mapan jumped, ran and rolled!

“Since I’ve seen all the effort you’ve put in, I think you have the talent to become a merchant. If you don’t have a greed for money, you are not a merchant. I urgently need 300 pieces of rabbit pelt. I’ll give you one gold, so can you get them for me? If you do, I will formally accept you as a merchant of Rosenheim kingdom! However, get it done as quickly as possible. I need them within 3 days.”

Ting

Quest: The Exchange Owner who needs Rabbit Pelts:

The owner of the Exchange requires a large quantity of rabbit leather. There is no need to know why he needs it, but it seems that doing it as quickly as possible would be good.

Difficulty: E

Requirement:

Three days.

If you fail, the Exchange owner's confidence in you will decline and you will not receive a commission for one month.

Reward:

Merchant Profession

‘Hooray, I’ve earned money!’ Singing with delight, Mapan accepted the request.

“He even gave me one gold, as expected of a merchant quest, even from the beginning, they give a lot of money.”

Rabbits were common beginner monsters that spawned in front of the castle. One rabbit leather sold for 10 coppers in a general store, so the total purchase price should have been 3000 coppers. Therefore, he calculated that 30 silver should have been sufficient.

Of course, the other party needed to have some benefits. In a proper business transaction, both sides needed to profit.

“Buying Rabbit Pelts! I’m willing to pay 11 coppers each!”

Mapan cried out with a loud voice in front of the castle. He was hoping that massive amounts of users hunting rabbits would come running. Nearby, another merchant shouted even louder.

“Buying Rabbit Pelts for 30 coppers!”

A person who was sewing next to them yelled, “Buying Rabbit Pelts for 50 coppers!”

“Damn! How could this have happened...”

The rabbit pelts that should have cost only 10 coppers were being

purchased at ridiculously high prices.

“What is happening?” The perplexed Mapan asked, but the answer drove him to despair.

“You didn’t know? You’re not the only person who is collecting rabbit pelts to become a merchant. Also, the people who want to learn sewing need rabbit pelts, so the price for them skyrocketed!”

Mapan was in tears. The prices were bringing beginner merchants to tears. The merchant occupation had a three day time limit. Without a choice, he had to use up all the money he had earned and barely obtained 300 rabbit pelts after hunting all day and night. Because of that, he became flat broke.

“Thank you, now you are a merchant!”

The owner of the exchange gave him a pat on the shoulder for a job well done; little did he know that Mapan’s shoulders were drooping. That had only been the beginning. It was the beginning of the harsh road of a merchant.

To raise his level and skills, he had to purchase loot from users at a costly price. Due to being weak, he was ignored during combat. But in order to purchase loot, he had to fight a torturous war of blood and sweat. Mapan, who had traveled far to Baran village, had experienced many joys and sorrows that he could not even begin to speak about.

Waiting for someone, who might or might not even come to his stall to sell loot, was really difficult, but there was an abundance of people who came and asked for unreasonable prices.

“My hardships are over!”

Ever since Mapan had formed a partnership with Weed, all of his anxiety and fears had disappeared. All he had to do was trust and follow Weed.

“I will follow him anywhere. All I have to do is trust him!”

Mapan made a firm resolution. A great warrior! An adventurer! A master of battle! Mapan, who only knew this side of Weed, had immense confidence in him. That emotion persisted until they reached Baran Village.

“How can this be?”

Mapan wanted to scream. Even when he rubbed his eyes to look again, Weed was making food and selling sculptures. To make matters worse, he was repairing things!

“Nooooooooo!”

While Weed was cheerfully cooking, someone was secretly weeping. That someone was Mapan. The Weed he knew as the great warrior was now selling food and sculptures.

“Isn’t that the worst case of a Japkae (Jack of Trades)?”

(T/N: ‘Japkae’ roughly means: jack of all trades but what it really means is someone who doesn’t stick to one skill tree and puts points in all of them and never specializing)

This was not something he could figure out with a guess. He needed to be sure, but Mapan was hesitant. He was afraid to know the answer. However, It wasn’t something he could not go without knowing, he had to ask.

“Um, Weed-nim, what is your profession?”

“Me? As you can see, I’m a sculptor.”

“A-a-a sculptor?”

Mapan’s head hurt as if he was struck on the back of his head with a blunt object.

‘The sculptor class is just as unpopular as the artist and the cleaner classes!’

Melancholy took a hold of Mapan; he pointed at the boiling cauldron with a trembling hand.

“Then, what about those dishes?”

“It’s a side job.”

“What about repairs...”

“It’s one of the skills I’m diligently learning. To learn the blacksmithing skill to make weapons and armor, I need to get the repair skill to at least the intermediate level.”

Mapan, who thought forming a team with Weed was destiny, couldn’t be any more disappointed.

“Well, yeah. This guy who is terribly unlucky... but how can there be such a jack of all trades?”

In his mind, the character called Weed was terrible in a worthless sense. His skill set was so haphazard that it was enough to go down in history as the lousiest character! Weed had diligently learned miscellaneous skills that were unappreciated by others. If it was Mapan, he would have given up and made a new character.

‘How sloppily leveled is his character that you’d get something like this!?’

However, Mapan was making a huge misconception. It was Weed’s painstaking struggle! He grew stronger little by little by continuously hitting the scarecrow at the beginner class training center, all the while eating the instructor’s meals.

He had made sculptures until his eyes were red in order to increase his art stat by at least 1 point. To raise his cooking skills, he became a cook for a troop of NPC soldiers who were part of a punitive group.

He cooked tens of thousands of dishes, created thousands of sculptures, and barely raised the character called Weed, but in Mapan's eyes, all he saw was a sloppily made character that had learned all kinds of skills. Mapan could be here now because even when he tripped or broke things, he learned something new and picked himself up.

‘This man is even more commercial-minded than me. Confucius had once said: “When there are three people walking, a teacher is bound to be among them.” Even from a jack of trades, I can learn something from him.’

Mapan decided to not regret his choice of forming a partnership with Weed. He enthusiastically bought loot beside Weed and opened up his own stall. Anyhow, he couldn't just sit and do nothing. While watching Weed selling food and sculptures during Mapan's spare moments, he was enlightened on being a merchant meant.

“What a wretched liar...!” There were moments where he was astonished greatly.

“He is making such unreasonable profits with such lousy ingredients!”

Other times, he got angry. For Mapan, who prided in being an upright merchant, it felt as if he had no room to compete.

“Isn’t he just a daylight robber and a fraud?”

Weed had a gift of brilliant eloquence that gently suited the buyer’s taste. With just a few words, a sculpture that was being sold for ten silver coins sold for fifteen silver coins, making Mapan boil with anger as he watched. After two days, Weed finally placed the sculptures that were on the display stand slowly into his bag.

“They sold a lot better than expected.”

The sculptures had been carved in his spare time in Lavias. More than half of them had been sold. The thing about sculptures, is that people don’t return to buy another one. An average person would buy one as a souvenir, unless he met a collector.

Even if the production cost of the sculpture is low at 10 silver coins, 30 silver coins can be obtained at best. Therefore 10 sculptures need to be sold to barely earn 3 gold. This had been quite useful in the early days, when Weed had been poor, but considering his current level, the profit from his wood carvings amounted to chump change.

Among the users in Baran Village, most people who would have purchased sculptures had already bought one. If Weed stayed any longer, all he would be able to sell would be his cooking. After raising his repair and cooking skills to 40%, Weed took down his stall. He glanced at Mapan who was beside him, purchasing loot

steadily.

“It’s time for us to depart.” Weed said.

“Huh? Depart to where?”

“We’ll be traveling to the Bar Khu mountain range that I already told you about in advance.”

Weed had to return Hera’s Cup to the Church of Freya within three months, so he had already planned to leave Baran Village. Furthermore, a lot of knowledge and experience was required to become a magnificent sculptor. Although Weed had become strong by using several methods, he did not forget the fact that his job was a sculptor. Weed visited the general stores and shops, and quickly prepared for the trip.

“Take care!” Ghandilva, the Village Chief, said warmly to Weed outside the gate.

The three Denarion soldiers, Dale, Becker, and Hosram, also said their goodbyes along with the village chief.

“I’ll come back and visit sometime.” Weed promised.

“Of course. We’ll not forget all the help you’ve given us!”

“See you later.”

“Yes, sir! After our duty is complete here, we’ll be returning back home. So, the next time we meet will probably be back at the Citadel.”

*

Weed and Mapan bought the local specialties of the big cities as they traveled south of Rosenheim Kingdom. Pearls and jade, white wine, cheese, olive oil, mithril and more, were all specialties in the southern cities.

The Kingdom of Rosenheim did not have a high technological or commercial prowess. Probably due to this reason, jewelry, food, and unrefined ores were being actively traded. Among the kingdoms in the center of the continent, there were some cities and countries that specialized in producing weapons and armor.

Naturally, these country’s weapons were more durable and had excellent attack and defense stats, in comparison to other countries. Thus, users who started in the center of the continent had that much of an advantage. However, in terms of adventure and opportunity, the kingdom of Rosenheim was not a bad choice.

“40 pieces of Jade please.”

The task of buying jewels was left to Mapan. With the accounting skill, it was possible to purchase merchandise at a more reasonable price. However, if you attempted to drop the price down too excessively, the trade could be canceled.

When that happened, the exchange owner would not do any business transactions with you for a maximum of ten days, so it was necessary to be cautious. Mapan, who had just finished bargaining, turned around to look at Weed.

“The price for the jade is 760 gold. Should I buy it?”

“Uhm...Can’t you cut the price further?”

“This is the limit with my skills.”

Weed’s hands trembled as they entered his pockets. Then 800 in gold coins came out. Mapan gave the money for the jewels to the seller and passed the change and jewels back to Weed.

“Where do we go now?”

“To Falcon village to get some pearls.”

50 pearls were purchased for 690 gold, and then 3 kg worth of mithril was purchased after arriving at the coal mining village. The wallet that only knew how to accept money was opened up, and in the end, even the small change was spent, leaving only 50 gold.

Soon enough, the fortune that he had amassed had dwindled, and his innocent money bag lost the fight. At the end of the ordeal, 50

gold was all that was left. Weed's former total fortune had been 1700 gold. The money which Weed had painstakingly earned and conserved was spent in an instant.

In the Britten Alliance, beyond the mountains of Bar Khu, the price for jewels was at least 25% higher than on this side of the mountain range. Even if one wasn't a merchant, marginal profit from market price and fame could be gained, so as many goods that could be purchased were bought.

“But, what is he doing?”

Every time Weed moved to a town to buy the local commodities, Mapan's eyes had a puzzling look. Even when Weed was walking down the road, he was always doing something. One of them was uprooting plants. Then, he diligently put them in his bag. Every now and then, he smiled delightedly.

“Weed-nim, might I ask what you are doing?” Mapan could not resist his curiosity, and Weed's answer was simple.

“You mean this? I'm uprooting herbs.”

“If it's a herb...”

“I learned Herbal Medicine; the terrain here is rugged, so that might be why there are a lot of medicinal plants.” Mapan swallowed his breath.

“Oh!” Weed, who had looked like an idol to Mapan, finally took shape as the worst jack of all trades ever!

“I judged this person too hastily!”

To think that I had deluded myself into thinking that the one who had hunted Death Knights and the undead was him just because he had their loot! It might be that he got lucky and found them somewhere. Of course, the chance of that happening was really slim, but Mapan, whose confidence in Weed had utterly dropped, thought of it as a possibility.

However, Mapan was still a man. He was a man who believed in justice and providence! Thanks to Weed, he had gained many benefits so far. Through the trading of loot, he had obtained a lot of skills and money. He also purchased the jewels for Weed at a reasonable price, and this also greatly raised his skills. This situation was not bad at all, so there was no need to go back on his decision to partner with Weed.

‘As a man, you cannot go back on your word!’ Mapan thought to himself.

Mapan earnestly purchased these special commodities for Weed. Mapan, unlike Weed, did not have a lot of capital, so his own purchases centered on food, such as olive oil or cheese. These items did not have high profit margins, but prices were stable, so the advantage was that there were no risks.

Mapan also had additional skills with trading food commodities,

so he bought a large quantity of food products at a cheap price, and bought a cart to carry them. Since the cost of a horse was over 100 gold, he purchased a mule at the end of its life, and the preparations for leaving were done.

Weed disposed of the multiple bags he had been carrying this whole time. Instead, he got help from Mapan to purchase a backpack from the general store to put his herbs in, which could hold 20 times its own volume, as well as reduce the weight by a quarter. By now, Mapan saw Weed as a full-fledged peddler.

Bar Khu Mountain Range.

The mountain range was located between the southern part of Rosenheim kingdom, and the eastern part of the Britten Alliance. Both countries bordered the range, but it was called the paradise for monsters.

Overflowing with monsters! Rugged terrain!

Both nations had armies of rangers stationed here to clear the area of monsters periodically. If not for that, the Kingdom of Rosenheim and the Britten Alliance would have suffered from fatigue because of all the monsters.

Roooooaaaar!!

As they climbed the mountain range, the horrifying sounds resonated. It was the roar of a fierce animal. It was the sound of

rampaging animals. Breaking branches and rough screams were audible. As expected of its reputation, it really was the paradise for monsters.

For a place that's not a dungeon but a field, it was rare to have this many monsters. Finally, the monsters appeared in front of the wagon Weed and Mapan rode in. Lycanthropes. They were werewolves, monsters around level 100.

The Lycanthrope variant was known to be around level 150. Of course, in these mountains, they were the lowest on the food chain. Because of this, they were pushed out of the heart of the mountain range and infested places like the ones Weed and Mapan were currently traveling through.

Unfortunately, Lycanthropes often traveled in packs and currently, over 10 of them had appeared at once. The roar a while back that sounded like the howling of wolves was perhaps the crying sound of these Lycanthropes. The reason for the howl was that prey had been found and that it was in their hunting ground. Mapan, who was sitting on the box seat of the wagon, was restless and nervous.

“The-they’ve finally appeared, and more importantly, what do we do!? Weed-nim, you did say that you will handle this!”

Even then, Weed was diligently using the carving knife in the assistant driver's seat. Zahab's carving knife. This unique item was something any sculptor could only wish for in their dreams. The carving knife was moving according to the flow of the grain of the wood, and creating a sculpture.

The Lycanthropes approached slowly. When they appeared, they resembled humans, with the exception of the head, which was that of a wolf. On their body, gray fur started growing all over. They were evil beings that could transform into wild dogs.

Ting

Handicraft skill proficiency has increased.

Level Up: Handicraft (Intermediate Lv: 4 | 0%):

Ability to use tools and hands increase by 5%

It affects many skills and stats.

When the Intermediate level in the handicraft skill rose by 1, stats increased by 5%. At the beginner level, a 3% increase was given per increase in level. When you think about it, the effect was now greater; however, it became more difficult to raise the skill level.

“That was quite fortunate.”

Just then, Weed was carving the shape of the tree he had passed by in great detail, so he was able to increase sculpture mastery by 1.5%. After all, there had been plenty of branches and foliage. It was difficult to carve a tree that had survived many years and had many rings. It was said that drawing a tree that lived over 1000 years was very painstaking and hard.

Weed had carved a very lifelike tree sculpture, which looked very similar to a real tree. It wasn't good enough to be proud of, but it was a pretty good sculpture nevertheless. There were times when the sculpting skill rose significantly that it was almost surprising, but then, there were times when he was stuck in a rut and the skill would barely increase.

Considering Weed's skill level of intermediate level 4, an increase of 1.5% was a large increase. Weed's skill level had increased just in the nick of time, and raised his stats.

“Wee-Weed-nim!”

As soon as Mapan was about to cry, Weed put away the carving knife. Then he took the sword out of the scabbard. The clay sword with the cold attribute!

“As a matter of fact, I've been sitting down for too long and was feeling sluggish, maybe it's time for me to loosen up my muscles? It's a pity that I missed seeing the transformation process, but that's fine. Since these guys aren't the only Lycanthropes living in the Bar Khu Mountain range.”

Weed mumbled as he watched the Lycanthropes. To make Lycanthrope-shaped sculptures, it is better to see the transformation process. Since they change in appearance as they transform, it was possible to make multiple sculptures showing the process in steps and increase his sculpting level by a good amount.

While Weed was getting off the wagon and holding his clay sword, Mapan let out a scream from behind him, “Surely you are not planning to fight with that sword?!”

Mapan was shocked when he saw the clay sword. The sword had chips and dents everywhere! Due to the intense hunting in Lavias, the durability of the clay sword had dropped to almost nothing.

Even though Weed had obtained lots of equipment from the undead monsters, the sword Weed used was still the clay sword. Dullahans only dropped hefty weapons such as iron maces and axes and Ghouls only dropped nails.

The Death Knight’s weapons couldn’t be used unless you were of a Knight class or had a level of at least 200, so Weed didn’t have much of a choice in terms of weapons. Since he hunted alone and in isolated places, he had to at least bear this much. Every time the sword broke, he replaced them, the number of times this had happened was in the dozens.

In the meantime, the number of Lycanthropes increased by ones and twos, and now, the number of Lycanthropes in the group exceeded 20. Weed saw Mapan’s face had turned deathly pale, so

Weed put the sword away.

*

As expected of the descendants of wolves, the Lycanthropes attacked courageously. They kicked hard at the ground, springing up, and roared wildly.

Growl!

The Lycanthropes let out a bestial roar! The sound dominated the battlefield, the old mule was terrified and bucked, while Mapan prepared for death. Lycanthropes were monsters with fast movement speed, so there was no way to escape.

It was at that moment...

Rooooaaaar!

Exploding out of Weed's mouth burst forth an intensive war cry. It raised a cloud of dust, the dry leaves piled on the ground cracked and crumbled. Even the branches on nearby tree's seemed to tremble, as if they were about to break.

The roar overwhelmingly swept away those who heard it.

Ting

Skill: You have used Lion's Roar:

The proficiency of the Lion's roar kill rise by 1%!

Lion's Roar current skill: level 1, at 1%.

As the skill level rises, the power increases.

The Lycanthropes hesitated, turning their heads away from feeling troubled after the roar. Weed did not miss the opening and ran at them, beating them down with his fists.

“Rapid Shadow Fist!” (Yon-hwan-kwon).

PowPowPowPow!

Yipe!

Weed lashed out at the Lycanthropes with his fists! For Weed, who had mainly hunted Death Knights in Lavi, the Lycanthropes, who were barely level 100, were no problem for Weed.

Even if they had numbers, for them to become a problem, they first had to be able to do some damage to Weed. The Lycanthropes rushed ferociously towards Weed.

“Seven celestial steps!”

Kicking off the ground, they flew at him, clawing and biting with their nails and teeth, Weed avoided them all by using his footwork skill. By battling them, Weed had once more rediscovered his footwork prowess. Until now, Weed had only used the footwork that had ability to avoid attacks, but the footwork skills in Royal Road also had unique abilities.

In the midst of sprinting forward and then taking a sharp turn in a 90-degree direction while running would be impossible in reality. That was due to the law of inertia. However, with footwork skill, you could achieve the impossible. During a sprint, you could switch to the opposite direction, and the instant rate of acceleration to reach that speed was almost invisible to the naked eye.

As the name implied, it consisted of 7 steps, instantly twisting in any direction while running, or appearing abruptly as if coming out of thin air. It was a skill that demonstrated remarkable value, and was as expected of a first rate martial arts skill.

“Seven Celestial Steps!”

Although the Lycanthropes came in from all directions, Weed twisted his body a few times to break through the enemies’

encirclement. As he changed directions instantaneously, like connecting the lines of the Big Dipper, Weed created vague afterimages.

Illusions!

As the Lycanthropes attacked the illusions, Weed escaped the encirclement, and he began his attack. Each time Weed's fist landed, an Lycanthropes became grey and one by one, they disappeared.

The Bar Khu mountain range was filled with monsters. It was a place that was the antonym of the word peaceful. However, at the moment, something extraordinary was happening.

(PR: antonym, a word opposite in meaning to another, e.g. bad and good)

Roooooaaaaar!

Uwaaaaaaaaaa!

The tremendous sound of a roar could be heard from the each end of the mountain range. Weed had just used Lion's Roar again. This was in order to improve his proficiency with his Lion's Roar skill, and Weed used this skill without regard whenever a monster appeared. Day, night, it didn't matter, and the shouting echoed throughout the mountain range was making quite a din.

The Bar Khu Mountain range was filled with enough monsters for someone to become fed up with. However the mountain range held, experience, money and items! For Weed, who liked to fight without limit, this place that was filled with monsters, was like second home to him.

“There’s got to be an undiscovered dungeon somewhere!”

The unexplored southwestern part of the mountains. Since there weren’t any proper towns or villages around, it was a possibility. Weed didn’t intentionally seek out monsters. Rather than that, he focused more on improving his sculpting skill. It was the ‘Sculpting Blade’ skill that Zahab had left, this skill had greatly enhanced Weed’s damage. The skill was an attack technique that ignored enemy defense and resistance; so it definitely was going to be a skill that was going to be more effective later on.

The skill Emperor Geihar left behind was to give life to sculptures, ‘Sculptural Life Bestowal’! The sculptures carved with passion would fight for their creator and master.

The sculptures that were made with higher art stat would be stronger, and they also grew in level after coming to life. This was the skill that allowed Emperor Geihar to conquer the continent. If life could be given to sculptures, in any situation, Weed would have subordinates that would follow him unconditionally.

“Skill Check: Sculptural Life Bestowal”

Skill: Sculptural Life Bestowal:

The skill that Emperor Geihar left behind for his successor, a sculptor's skill that is unknown to others.

Limitations:

Can only be used with Advanced Sculpture mastery.

Skill requirements:

5000 Mana.

Art Stat 10 (permanent consumption).

Level decreased by 2 (permanent consumption).

CAUTION:

Sculptures have strong sense of individuality and pride. When they see another sculpture identical to them, they will fight that sculpture with hostility.

In order to use this skill, you first needed to get to advanced skill level in sculpture mastery, which was still very distant to Weed. On top of that, the consequence of giving life to a sculpture was losing art stat and levels, and was something you could not infinitely repeat.

“While it’s a ridiculous skill, it’s certainly still a useful technique!”

The Sculpting Blade and the Sculpture Life Bestowal, the two techniques left by Master Sculptors were this powerful. Weed couldn’t imagine how powerful the remaining three skills would be. In addition, he thought, what is at the end of sculpting after obtaining all 5 skills?

Weed had had the opportunity to become a Weapon Master in martial arts previously; however, he had given up the chance and had remained a legendary moonlight sculptor, which had left him with worries.

Other than being able to level up handicraft faster and having the Sculpting Blade, there wasn’t really much of a benefit. Even then, all he could do was to catch up to the knights and swordsmen. Sculptors had the path of a sculptor, there was a chance. One had to make the utmost use of that chance.

‘Sculptural Destruction, Sculpture Life Bestowal, and even the Sculpting Blade! While using them to the best of my abilities, I need to find the remaining skills. And finally, I need the basis of all sculpting.’

The rise of sculpting skills would affect everything. When no monsters appeared, Weed sat on the cart and sculpted. He made sculptures of the fighting scenes with monsters, or the surreal landscapes and its trees!

Ting

Level Up: Sculpture (Intermediate Lv: 3 | 0%):

Sculptures become more delicate and detailed.

Eventually, intermediate sculpting skill level rose to level 3. After this, Weed took out the emeralds, pearls and jade that he had purchased from the Rosenheim kingdom when he was traveling around.

“What are you doing?”

Halfway through the mountain range, Weed had abruptly pulled out a jewel, and Mapan’s face showed his confusion. There was no reason to boast about his wealth, and it’s not like he was going to give the jewels to the monsters either.

‘Is he taking a good look at the gems?’

However, Mapan was completely shocked at Weed’s next action. He had started carving the gem with his sculpting knife.

“Aaugh!”

Mapan unwittingly felt like screaming. Since he had personally purchased the jewels, he knew full well their worth. He knew it far too well. Those were some absurdly valuable jewels! Although the gemstones haven’t been processed, the price was high enough to make one faint. But, without hesitation Weed continued to carve the jewels surface with his carving knife.

“What...what have you...?”

Just before he attempted to stop Weed’s actions, Mapan’s eyes widened in surprise, because the gemstone was gradually being shaped, little by little. The degree of the etching wasn’t even visible unless you looked at it very carefully. As the gemstone was carved down, the emanating radiance of the jewel shined brighter.

Mapan stared blankly as Weed’s hands continued to move.

“It’s beautiful!”

sagak sagak

Mapan's eyes were filled with wonder, as Zahab's carving knife carved the jewel and took shape. Each dull side of the jewel changed steadily, and the gem radiated more brightly.

“How can a gem be this beautiful?”

Weed's intermediate sculpture level had risen, making it possible to work with gems. To work with gems, one needed basic skills and handicraft skills. For Weed, who had intermediate level, he wasn't lacking in handicraft. He also had Zahab's sculpting knife, which was a unique item worthy of being called a sculptor's treasure!

However, basic skills and handicraft were only requirements; the thing that truly made the gems beautiful was the art stat. Weed's art stat was currently near 300. The occupation of legendary moonlight sculptor gave a +100 to the art stat, and the rest came from the masterpieces and other sculptures he had made. Because his art stat was astonishingly high, all kinds of effects were given to the gems.

“For it to be this dazzling....!”

Mapan's body trembled all over. This was because he imagined what would happen afterwards. Buying and selling the raw gems from the Rosenheim kingdom to the Britten Alliance would yield a large profit.

However, what would happen if Weed faceted those gems and sold them? Also, if the jewel was worked with the heart and soul of the greatest sculptor, what would the price be...?

‘I can’t even guess!’

Mapan fell into deep thought. He drove the wagon more carefully, so as to not interfere with the work of the faceting. Due to the ridiculously high handicraft skill and the sculpting knife, beautiful works of art were produced, even though it looked like he was working sloppily.

The food Weed cooked not only looked good, but it tasted good. Overall, it was due to Weed’s handicraft, cooking and sculpting skill being intermediate level. Those skills were exhibited by the jewels Weed carved.

Chapter 2: The Stone That Gathers Lightning

Paruvan.

It was a place that travelers and Caravans stayed for lodging while traveling over the Bar Khu mountain range. It was originally a place built by the ranger division of the Rosenheim Kingdom to rest themselves, so it wasn't a place that people visited often.

“We're lucky enough to have found this place. We're only a day or two from our destination.”

“The trip was so rough, I thought I was going to die.” Halman laughed.

“This was all because of you, Margaux.”

“You ought to say it straight, Levi. It all started because you killed that guy.”

Halman, Margaux, Levi, and Gran, were four famous player killers from the Britten Alliance. They lived for the joy of killing other players and looting their equipment. The notorious quartet was better known as ‘Dwichigi Quartet’.

(T/L: Dwichigi means: Backstab)

However, about one month ago, they had fearlessly messed with the Cloud guild. This guild wasn't just a large guild in the Britten Alliance, but it was one of the ten largest guilds in the whole continent. It boasted a membership count of over 6,000 players, and if the allied guilds were included, it was an influential force to be reckoned with. The guild had enough influence to rival that of the Britten Alliance.

In other words, even for the Dwichigi Quartet, the Cloud guild wasn't a name they could easily ignore. In fact, they didn't mess with the Cloud guild on purpose. For a while, the four who were on the most-wanted list decided to focus on hunting to level up, but a guy named Brandy acted arrogantly and said:

“Get out of here! This is our area!” Brandy had yelled

“Huh, who is this guy?”

“That's bullshit!”

Naturally, the four flew into rage. At this point their red PK symbol had already disappeared, since they had donated a lot of money to the temple and had just hunted for a while. Brandy disrupted their hunting and claimed that this place was his area, since he had no idea who the 4 were.

Then Levi exploded in anger and said, “Let's just kill this bastard!”

“I’ll teach you not to mess with us!”

The four who usually killed first on a whim obviously didn’t have the restraint to let things like this go unpunished. Brandy was killed instantly. As expected of the notorious Dwichigi, the four stealthily positioned themselves behind his back and attacked. Brandy’s level was lower than 3 of the 4 Dwichigi members, so the simultaneous attack from the 4 gave him no chance and he died easily.

Then they received a map as loot.

Ting

Item: The tomb of the one with short legs:

Durability: 1/1

The place where the short eccentric fell into slumber.

In the midst of two canyons, underneath the sturdy tree.

Rumbling, pounding!

A narrow road.

The primal power cannot be passed without sacrifice.

Among the pounding, seek the sound which does not ring.

Author: Reineig R. Hansberg

“What’s this?”

The four laughed and ignored the map. They thought it was one of those treasure maps that were scattered around. Since then, however, they’ve been persistently tracked by the Cloud guild. Only then did the quartet realize that they had attacked a member of the Cloud guild.

“Damn it! You bloody idiot. If he had told us that he was from the Cloud guild, I would have never killed him!”

“We killed him without giving him a chance to speak.”

“How is that our fault!”

“Anyways, we need to lay low for now.”

From then on, the four hid in places where no one passed by and did not reveal themselves for 2 weeks. However, the pursuit by the Cloud guild did not die down even a little bit. To avoid death, the four had overcome many hardships to barely escape.

The levels of the quartet exceeded 220, but without their PKing experience, they would not have been able to escape from multiple crises.

Halman finally spoke, "This is weird."

"I think so too, don't you agree?"

"An entire guild wouldn't be chasing us for just killing one member."

"Yeah, they're seriously trying to kill us even to the bitter end."

"Wait a minute, what was that map we picked up from that guy?"

"I think it was something like 'the tomb of the one with short legs'..."

"There's no mistake then, this map must be extraordinary. Those guys weren't after us, they were after this map."

"Hehe!"

“Then we should try to find the treasure from this map.”

Since then, the four had started to discover the secrets of the map. They had crossed over to another kingdom, to an archive with old books and found information regarding the map, then, they deciphered the meaning of the phrases. As a result, they had come to the Bar Khu mountain range.

“Now all that’s left to do is entering the tomb...”

“Yeah, but what’s should we do? There isn’t an Adventurer among us, so traps in the dungeon can’t be dismantled.”

“That’s...”

“Our bodies can take a few traps.”

“Even if the whole process goes smoothly, one guy still has to die to the final lightning strike. So, which one of us is going to die?”

Obviously, no one wanted to die. The quartet who liked killing others didn’t want to die themselves, so they stared at each other. Then, Gran held a beaming smile.

“It’s decided.”

“Who?”

“You aren’t pointing at me, right?”

Gran pointed his finger, but it wasn’t pointing at any of the 4 including himself. Gran was pointing towards the bottom of the mountain range. While arriving, Weed and Mapan’s cart was creaking away.

“Wow! I did not expect to meet people in a place like this. Hello, my name is Mapan.”

“I’m Gran, and this here is Levi, Halman, and Margaux.”

“Nice to meet you.”

The quartet all had big smiles on their face, welcoming Weed and Mapan.

“It’s rare to see people traveling in the Bar Khu mountain range, for what reason are you traveling?”

“Ah, we came in order to trade.” Mapan went ahead and replied.

“For trade? Then the two of you are merchants, right?”

“Yes, I am a merchant, and Weed-nim over here is a sculptor.”

“Oh, I see.”

Gran had a wide smile. Halman, Margaux and Levi also were trying to hold back their laughter.

‘He says he’s a sculptor!’

‘There are people that would choose that as a class?’

However, when they dealt with Weed and Mapan, they were entirely courteous. This was because their task still needed to be completed. Most cautious of the four, Gran asked the questions. Ever since the incident with Brandy, they were more careful in dealing with others.

“Anyways, I understand. But how did you come across the Bar Khu Mountain range as a sculptor and merchant when it’s filled with monsters? How did you deal with the monsters?”

“That’s due to Weed over here...”

Mapan was about to explain, but Weed elbowed him on the side.

“Weed-nim?”

Mapan who was about to speak zipped his mouth shut. He noticed that Weed wanted to hide something and stopped. Gran noticed and raised his eyebrows then laughed.

“Well, is it difficult for you to tell us this?”

In truth, Weed had a feeling that the quartet wanted to hide something. On the large continent of Versailles, notwithstanding the vast multitudes of users, it was rare to meet people in the place known as ‘monster’s paradise’.

Typically, when you meet other people in out-of-the-way places like the mountains, you would greet them, and maybe even eat food with them. If your destinations were the same, you would travel together for a while, but these people were far too happy.

Also they became even more delighted when they found out their class. Weed naturally glanced at the four, scrutinizing them. Gran was standing at the front talking to Weed and Mapan, while the 3 others were at the sides and the back.

‘They might be bandits.’

If you thought that monsters were the only risk on the continent of Versailles, then you were in for a world of hurt! Rather, encountering users in a place like this was far more dangerous. Weed acted naturally and said:

“I am a sculptor, but I have a unique technique.”

“What kind of technique?”

“It’s a kind of yell. When the monsters hear the sound they run away. Shall I demonstrate?”

“Yes, I’m curious.”

Weed gathered his mana with all his might and cast the skill, Lion’s Roar.

“Roooooaaaaar!”

At the hint that Weed was going to use roar, Mapan covered his ears with his hands, but the four were unprepared and staggered from the shock.

“Damn!”

“How can this roar be ...!”

Gran calmed down Margaux and Levi with just a glance, looking back at Weed and smiling widely.

“What a tremendous roar. That reminds me, I’ve heard a roar several times. This has the effect of keeping monsters away?”

The Lion’s Roar skill.

Weed had not yet formed a party with Gran, so his leadership had

not increased, and the additional effects did not take effect. The only thing they experienced was the loud noise.

“Yes, monsters hesitate when they hear this sound, and during that moment, I escape.”

The quartet laughed after Weed’s explanation.

‘It’s really not a big deal.’

‘I guess these guys are the perfect bait?’

‘We should have these guys go to that place.’

‘We only need 1...’

‘What, is there a problem? We take out the remaining one with our own hands, and since they’re merchants they’ll drop a lot of loot.’

‘Good, let’s do it.’

The four all quickly came to a conclusion without even talking, but by simply communicating their intent with their eyes. Gran put on an earnest face toward Mapan and Weed and said, “So far, this trick may have let you pass through safely, but the Bar Khu mountain range is a really dangerous place. You could call this meeting fate, so from here on out we’re going to be your escort.

Anyway, since we're traveling on the same route and we're offering this out of goodwill, there is no reason to refuse. Haha..."

"Haha! If it is like that, then we're truly grateful."

Mapan purposely laughed loudly. As a weak merchant, it wasn't a bad idea to accompany a group of 4 players that looked strong.

"We will be in your care."

Weed noticed that something was fishy from the glint in their eyes, but decided to play along for now to find out how far this would go. So Weed also quietly nodded in acknowledgement to their offer of an 'escort'. He had noticed that the situation was turning for the worse, but from the looks in the quartet's eyes he could do nothing but follow...for now.

The fun of an adventure is in traveling, seeing new places and meeting comrades. Reliable comrades that can cover your back. Hunting with friends builds intimacy and closeness.

This was the fun of playing Royal Road. At times, Weed enjoyed hunting with others. Since he played so much of the time, it would be unreasonable to be always together, but still, being together was a rather good thing. However, this was not the case with this unknown quartet. Around the wagon, the four assumed the role of fighting monsters, and out of the corner of their eyes, they observed Mapan and Weed.

‘Well, nothing’s unusual about him.’

‘I think he is sculpting?’

‘It seems he really is a sculptor.’

The four were completely at ease. However, they were still suspicious of even a sculptor since they had accumulated a lot of notoriety in the last month. Just then, Weed pulled out one of the raw gemstones. The Dwichigi Quartet turned the focus of their attention on it, and one of them asked.

“Huh? Isn’t that a jewel?”

Immediately, Margaux revealed a deep curiosity. Mapan replied with a smile.

“Yes, Weed is currently faceting jewels.”

“Oh, jewelry faceting?”

“Yup.”

“Jewelry faceting... That’s amazing!” Margaux’s young eyes were full of greed.

‘Freaking jackpot!!’

‘I’d like that to be a drop...’

Weed tightly clenched on Zahab’s sculpting knife while sculpting, but the four did not start a fight.

‘They aren’t attacking even after seeing a jewel, so they have something else they want from us.’

In the quartet’s minds, Weed and Mapan were trapped like rats with nowhere to escape to, so they accommodated their needs. The deceivers and the deceived! And the one pretending to be deceived!

“Let’s have meal here before continuing on. We’ll prepare the food.”

“We are thankful for the escort... so we’ll prepare the meal.”

“Haha, no, please wait a bit.”

The four sometimes gave Weed and Mapan the drops from the monsters.

“This isn’t much, but I hope you’ll accept it.”

“Since we’re travelling on the same road aren’t we comrades? It’s only fair to share the loot dropped by the monsters.”

“Please accept them.” The 4 quartet easily hit it off with Mapan.

“This shameless guy...”

Mapan received with a wide smile, but Weed’s suspicion of the situation deepened further.

‘A favor without a reason... such a thing does not exist. If they’re not planning to attack us, what is the reason?’

A normal person feels grateful when others give presents, or towards those who are nice to them, but for Weed, all he felt was suspicion. In this situation, it was not necessary for them to share the items. It was too awkward since they tried too hard to be nice. Nevertheless, Weed didn’t betray even a hint of his emotions.

Since Mapan really trusted the quartet, Weed was able to hide the fact that he greatly distrusted the quartet. A day passed by just like that, and they arrived at a canyon. The canyon was only 20 meters wide, but it was a deep canyon with a dense fog covering the valley below. Because there was a bridge, crossing the canyon did not seem too difficult.

“There’s a bridge here. What a sturdy looking bridge... We can cross over with this bridge.”

As Mapan went to drive the wagon, Gran smiled and obstructed him.

“Gentlemen, what is your reason for adventuring?”

“What?”

“I think that fully enjoying this magnificent view is the heart of an adventure. There seems to be a path that leads down, so let’s take that path. Doesn’t this path seem more interesting? What do you think?”

Mapan became hesitant upon hearing Gran’s words. In the Versailles Continent there was no such thing as a stereotypical road. You could travel through the forest, or climb over mountains. There was no need to always travel on well paved roads.

Nevertheless, if you think about it logically, it didn’t make sense to go down into the canyon when you could cross the bridge comfortably. Even Mapan, who was oblivious to the situation, finally sensed that something was wrong.

“Well, is that really necessary...?”

Mapan tried to reveal his intention to refuse. As a merchant he wanted to take the safer path. So he was refusing the quartet’s suggestion.

shiiiiing

Halman, Margaux and Levi all placed their hands on their scabbards. Weed and Mapan found themselves surrounded. A merchant and a sculptor. There was no reason to be tense, but they prepared just in case something went wrong, at that hair raising instant. The moment Mapan strongly refused!

“We should go. It sounds like fun.” Weed agreed with Gran’s suggestion.

“Haha! I knew you’d come around. You’re a man with spirit.”

Gran, Halman and the rest took their hands off their scabbards and smiled.

Weed and Mapan continued traveling down the canyon in the carriage with the Dwichigi Quartet leading them.

The incline of the canyon was very steep, and the wheels of the carriage became stuck several times. Without the help of the quartet, it would have been impossible for them to go down. Gran and Halman pulled the cart from the front, and Levi and Margaux pushed from behind.

“Um, Sorry about all of this.”

“Haha! Not at all Mapan-nim. This is nothing!”

Gran and Halman treated the carriage as if it was their own. The quartet didn’t spare any sincerity since they thought the cart

would be theirs soon.

“Oh, I think there is a trail over there...”

Gran led the way. He went around here and there, occasionally going back the same way.

“Ah, the scenery looks far better over there. It would be preferable if we go back that way.”

Gran combed through the area in the canyon several times. On this, Weed was the one who really benefited.

“Whoa! This one here is a red Sen medicinal herb. Over there is a blue Ceylon herb...!”

The Bar Khu mountain range was a rich repository of herbs. At the bottom of the canyon in the area where the sun shined brightly had various herbs growing sporadically. Weed eagerly pulled them out and placed them in his mesh bag.

“What are you doing?”

“What do you think I’m doing? I’m pulling out herbs.”

On top of being lost, they were being delayed even more due to Weed.

‘Dammit!’

‘I’m going to kill him with my own hands!’

The veins on the foreheads of each of the quartet were pulsing from anger. After a couple of hours, Mapan was exhausted, and the quartet was exhausted as well.

–Group Whisper–

– Hey, Gran. Did you memorize the location correctly?

– You want me to pull out the map in front of them?

– Just distract the two of them for a bit and keep their attention away. That guy named Weed looks like an idiot so don’t mind him, but the guy Mapan, he’s observing our behaviour and that bothers me.

– Okay. Just do it quickly!

Margaux approached the wagon.

“Hey Mapan, I’m actually quite interested in sculpting. Would you mind asking Weed if I can observe him at work?”

Using that as an excuse, Margaux obstructed the view of where Gran and the others were. In the meantime, Gran spread out a map of the current location and confirmed the location of the tomb. Gran’s eyes were beaming.

‘Well, we followed the right route. Just walked passed it by just a little!’

“Now, how about we head this way?”

Gran and the quartet had the wagon turn back towards where they had come from. After searching through the bushes and trees, they finally found the monument and the tomb. Beside the monument was the entrance. The four chuckled and each of them said something.

“Huh? Could this be a dungeon?”

“A dwarf’s grave?”

“Wow! We’re in good luck. We should head in. There is no reason to turn back now that we’re here.”

“Mapan, Weed! Naturally, you’ll come with us right?”

Chapter 3: Instruments And Intrigue

Ting

New Dungeon: You are the first adventurers to enter the tomb of the instrument-loving dwarf:

Benefits:

Fame increased by 200 (+200 FAME).

Double experience and 2x normal item drop rate.

The first monster killed will drop the best quality item it can drop.

“Wow!”

“Awesome!”

“We’re the first to find this place!”

The quartet shouted ecstatically as they entered the dungeon. Their levels were higher than the average, but most of this growth came from player killing rather than hunting. Therefore, this was their first time discovering a dungeon.

“Come! From here on, just trust us.”

Gallantly, the quartet took the lead. Originally, the purpose of going through the canyon had been for this exploration, so after having arrived at their objective, their enthusiasm rose to an all-time high.

“It’s exhilarating! Right, Weed-nim?”

Mapan was happy. It was a rare experience for a merchant. Weed only nodded his head silently.

‘So their aim was to bring us here.’

Now, he began to understand the quartet’s behavior. It explained why they were so strangely nice, openly kind and why they got them to go down into the canyon.

‘These guys were not trying to go over the Bar Khu Mountain range, from the beginning their goal was to find this place. They must have information about this place.’

At this point, there was no need to show that he knew what was going on, so Weed still acted as if he knew nothing and played the fool.

“Thanks to Gran-nim we get to experience an amazing adventure. Sculptors do not find experiences like this so easily...”

“Yes, just believe in us. Hunting together with others is one of the real joys of Royal Road.”

The quartet made a path through as they entered deeper into the cave. Weed and Mapan followed slowly after them.

“Keeek! It’s an enemy.”

“Enemies are appearing!”

“These humans are entering our nest.”

Werewolf plunderers!

Deeper inside the tomb, the werewolves that were relaxing beside a lit campfire reacted. There were many werewolves living inside this dungeon. Lycanthropes were extremely populous in the Bar Khu Mountain range. The werewolves ,who were already in their wolf form, attacked the group.

“Huh, they’re just Lycanthropes?”

Sigh

“What a huge disappointment!”

The quartet unsheathed their swords and easily dealt with the Lycanthropes. The Lycanthropes here were a bit stronger than their field counterparts at level 130, but they couldn't beat the blades of Gran and Levi.

‘They’re strong.’ Weed judged.

It wasn't just their level. They also had good reflexes and judgment. They knew where and what to attack and how to properly strike an opponent. They were gifted in combat!

‘four players... Could they be the Dwichigi Quartet!?’

The movie Weed had seen on a website flashed inside his mind. Videos uploaded by the victims with the wish for vengeance. He didn't really remember their faces, but now that he had seen how they fought, Weed knew. But Weed sighed.

‘It looks like they’re beginners in exploring.’

The first slain monster would drop the best quality item that it can drop. Therefore, it would have been preferable to chase away the Lycanthropes and hunt a boss class monster instead. But the

quartet didn't seem to care and advanced further into the cave. One of the benefits of being the first to find this dungeon had been wasted.

“All you guys have to do is trust us.”

“Yes, that's all you have to do.”

The four senselessly laughed as they butchered the Lycanthropes.

Either way, one couldn't ignore their combat skills. A player killer's skill proficiency was much higher compared to that of normal players of similar level. Probably due to their experience fighting people, they were skilled in fighting against monsters. They didn't miss a weak point, and they fought well as a group.

To cap it all off, they spent money like it was nothing. They gulped down mana, health and stamina regeneration potions which cost 5 gold each like it was water while exploring. The money was earned from selling items from player killing.

If they had earned money from hunting, they wouldn't be spending money this extravagantly. They didn't even pick up the copper or the loot the Lycanthropes dropped. The quartet found it bothersome to pick up items that might sell for a few silvers in a general store. For Weed, who attacked a monster for even 1 copper, the quartet were people from a different world.

‘Should I also become a player killer? I'll lose all the fame I've

gained so far but it looks like I can earn a lot...’

While Weed was picking up coppers as he watched the fight, Mapan found himself in a crisis. One of the Lycanthrope passed through the quartet and was approaching him.

“Eek! A Lycanthrope!”

Mapan looked at Weed, pleading to be saved. But, Weed completely surprised Mapan instead.

He had seen Weed extinguish many Lycanthropes. Many, many Lycanthropes! As soon as they had appeared, Weed would let out a loud roar.

“ROOOOAAAAAAR!”

Then, the Lycanthropes were mercilessly mashed into pulp. When the sword had needed repair and couldn’t be used, Weed kicked and head butted. For Weed, nothing was impossible in a fight. It may have seemed strange seeing such confident behavior, but Lycanthropes were not scary at all. It was because Weed was beside him, Mapan had nothing to fear. He believed that Weed would protect him. It was something Mapan truly believed.

But...how could this be?

Weed showed signs of being far more terrified than himself. Weed’s face had turned into a deep blue color; his body was

shaking in fear, in complete and utter despair.

“Um...Weed-nim?”

When Mapan tried to say something, Weed covered his mouth.

“Ack! Are we going to die?”

“ ... ”

Mapan was left speechless. He had no idea of what Weed was thinking. The Lycanthrope attacked!

Growl!

The werewolf charged at him, but Mapan avoided it by rolling on the ground without a moment to think. Even so, he was fine. Mapan had seen Weed fight many times, so he was used to the Lycanthrope's attacks. The Lycanthrope charges in first and it attacks with its jaw and claws, and it was because of that, that Mapan barely avoided getting hurt. Weed also rolled to evade the Lycanthrope's attacks. He was covered in dirt and his clothes were a mess. The Lycanthropes pursued the closest target which was Weed.

“Uwaaaaaaa!”

But Weed was able to avoid them by rolling around and kept his

body intact. Fortunately, when Weed rolled near the quartet, Margaux immediately finished off the remaining Lycanthrope. After the battle, the quartet apologized to Weed and Mapan.

“We are sorry about this. To let one Lycanthrope through, we made a huge mistake.”

“No, it’s OK; we are still alive after all. Thank you for saving us there...”

Hearing Weed’s words, Halman grinned.

– Group Whisper –

– Just like I thought, these guys are nothing special.

– We were worried for nothing, just because his equipment looked decent.

– Well, his equipment are common equips that can be used by any class. And they’re only lvl 100 or so equips anyway. Even his blade that dangles around his waist is the same.

– Then let’s hurry and go!

The quartet finally were relieved of all their doubts and lost their wariness. But, they had no inkling of Weed's intentions.

Lycanthropes! Pah!

Weed had watched as just one escaped the quartet's slashes. It seemed coincidental that one of them went past the quartet to endanger Weed and Mapan, but it was not. Considering the quartet's combat abilities, the situation was manageable. But, they let one through on purpose. It was to see how Weed and Mapan would react. And Weed acted as if he was fooled.

Booom!

Crack!

Rummmmmble!

"Aaaaahhhh!"

Without a thief or an adventurer in the party, the traps couldn't be removed. The floor sinks to reveal metal spikes rising up or floundering after being flattened by sandbags that weigh 10 times more happened frequently. They fell into every trap that could be called a trap and sometimes they fell for into it again. In Weed's eyes, the traps were obvious and seeing the quartet fall into traps over and over again, he almost wanted to say where they were.

‘Gah, just put your trust in us.’

Of course, that thought disappeared after seeing Halman screaming while bleeding heavily. The dwarven tomb had two underground floors. Gran found the stairs heading down to the second floor without hesitation.

“Aha, fortune smiles on us! Hahaha!”

Gran laughed heartily. Weed didn’t take his laughter seriously. They arrived on the underground second floor. This floor had more dangerous traps set up everywhere. The seldom appearing Lycanthropes were not scary at all but there was no end to the amount of traps.

Hwareureuk!

Oil poured from the ceiling, and without giving time to react it ignited into flames. Halman, whose health was already low turned gray and was logged out. Following slowly behind, Weed and Mapan were safe.

“Such...”

“This trap was ridiculous.”

The remaining members of the quartet didn’t shed a tear for

their fallen comrade. They looked at the result with a slightly different approach. One less person meant a higher share for those remaining.

‘Only two more to go’

‘Well, if one more dies, I will get...’

‘I want to be the only one left alive.’

They had no loyalty. After Halman’s death, the others quietly wished for the deaths of the rest. And they already planned to kill Weed and Mapan at an appropriate time.

“But...” Gran suddenly spoke.

“It is a little unfair that we are the only ones at risk.”

Margaux and Levi were surprised with Gran’s words.

–Group Whisper–

– Gran, what the hell are you doing?

– We need someone to sacrifice when we get to the thunderbolts.

Are you going to deal with them right now?

– Just watch for now. I have an idea.

“What do you mean?” Mapan asked awkwardly, but Gran only smiled in response.

“It’s not a big deal. It is my intention to distribute the risk. One of my own colleagues has just died, don’t you guys feel even a bit responsible?”

“And?”

“I would like one of you to take the lead. Since we’re companions that are traveling the same road we should share the same risk.”

Mapan was clearly hesitant. In his mind he strongly wanted to leave, but the current atmosphere made it hard to speak. He felt that he should never have come to this place!

‘Still, I am truly indebted to Weed...’

At that moment Mapan steeled himself.

“I’ll take the lead.”

Weed volunteered before Mapan could speak.

“As a sculptor my offense is minimal, but I do have HP to spare, so please allow me.”

“Oh, then you have my thanks.”

From then on, Weed played the lead. You couldn't call them a party because Weed and the quartet had never proposed it! They had not invited him or Mapan to their party as they didn't want to share the experience. They only gave away the cheap common loot that they didn't want.

Player killers usually don't enter most towns. In very serious cases, village guards could attack player killers and they might meet someone who held a grudge against them, so it was better to refrain from visiting a town. This reason was why they were gladly giving away items they weren't going to be able to sell.

‘This is an interesting place.’

The dungeons Weed had explored were ones filled with lots of monsters. Swarms of bloodthirsty monsters moved about in packs and the hunting grounds were filled with wandering Death Knights. For Weed, it was the first time exploring a dungeon filled with traps.

‘It's over as soon as I become careless.’

Just a little bit ahead of him was a place where blue and red tiles were arranged like a baduk board. It was the moment when a trap-finding skill would have been used. However, there was no thief or adventurer in the group to use it.

(TL: baduk: most people know it as 'Go', the Japanese name for the game)

“Hey Weed, we have to keep moving.” Gran encouraged him from behind.

Weed advanced while pressing firmly on the floor, but he moved slowly in order to quickly respond to any traps. Weed first stepped on a blue tile. Nothing happened. It was a relief. Then, he stepped on the red tile. Again nothing happened. But Weed still had 50 meters to go to the end of the passageway. With no clue when a trap might spring.

‘Blue tile. Red tile. Blue tile. Red tile. I stepped on alternating tiles and nothing happened. If this was the way to dismantle a trap, then it was far too easy. If it is like that...?’

Weed had a thought. What would happen when two tiles of the same color were stepped on? He stepped on blue tiles twice in a row. Still nothing happened. This made him even more wary.

‘The colored tiles were made as a deception. It was not meant to be anything. It was made as a distraction. If that is the case....’

Weed's eyes became sharper.

‘There...’

He scanned ahead and found an almost invisibly thin thread extended at the height of an ankle. Since it was at the boundary between the red and blue tiles, it was a difficult trap to find unless you were paying attention.

‘The person who trips it is in trouble.’

Weed naturally stepped past the string. Gran was next, and followed directly behind Weed. Rather than sticking close to him though, there was a little bit of distance between them. It was far enough from Weed to not be able to help if he set off a trap. Then, it was Levi and Margaux who followed behind Gran. Mapan was at the end of the line. The quartet needed one person for the lightning so Mapan was at the safest place.

Gran had also seen that thread. Though it was very faint and thin, being keen on Weed's cautious movement had allowed him to discover it. The reason for being so keen was that he might set off a trap that Weed avoided due to luck.

‘Hmm, this trap...Is it just coincidence that he silently avoided it? Or...’

Gran lightly passed over the thread. But he didn't stop to say

anything to the person behind him. He moved a bit more quickly since he didn't know what would happen.

tuduk

(T/L: sound effect of trap being sprung)

Levi had moved carelessly onto the thread, cutting it in the process. At that moment, the walls to the left and right opened up and a rain of arrows poured out.

“Keuahak!”

Levi, who had a large build could do nothing as the arrows flew into his body. All he could do was scream helplessly.

“He-help me!”

As Levi begged, Gran and Margaux stood still on the spot. Eventually Levi died from the numerous arrow wounds, and a single breastplate dropped where he had been standing.

“Fool.”

“How pitiful to die at a place like this.”

Margaux took the armor for himself. Gran and Margaux just

grinned at each other. They each distrusted the other, seeing as neither of them had moved a finger to help Levi.

After all, the four members of Dwichigi Quartet had met each other as murderers in the first place. The group was merely formed to kill others for fun and deprive them of their items. They didn't have friendship or loyalty to each other so they could have parted at any time.

Rumble!

Boom! Boom! Boooooom!

The pathways appearance changed.

A single, straight tunnel appeared before them, leading through the underground cave. Thunderbolts crashed into the path. White lightning blasted randomly inside the passage ahead. Although it was a magnificent sight, it was also endlessly dangerous.

Lightning-bolt. A three circles spell with a mind of its own, striking without any kind of pattern. Weed looked back.

“How am I supposed to go through there?”

Gran pulled out a small stone.

“We're fortunate. This is a stone that collects lightning. With

this, we can safely go across.”

“I see.” Weed identified the stone as he took it.

Ting

Item: Lightning stone:

Durability: 100/100

A special stone with high iron content. It has the power to attract electricity.

If it is refined it can become good quality iron.

Equiped:

Electric Resistance 99%.

Has the ability to absorb electricity.

As Weed read through the stone’s description, Gran and Margaux

laughed coldly.

‘We will cross while using him as a sacrifice.’

‘After we pass this obstacle it’ll be the place where the treasure is’

One victim was necessary in order to cross this road. The one holding the lighting stone could do nothing but die.

“Hey weed, just go through it already. You may die but then we would be safe, isn’t that worth the risk?”

Gran gave a toothy grin. At that moment, they finally revealed their true colors! Weed consented.

“Well, it is a good thing if only I die and everyone else can cross.”

“And?”

“What are you going to do on the way back?”

“...!”

Gran and Margaux looked at each other with dumbfounded expressions. They had only thought about getting to the treasure. They had not even thought of going back. It had completely slipped their minds.

“It’s...”

“Damn it.”

They had obtained only one lightning stone! They would surely die when they return. Gran drew his sword.

“Now that things have become like this, you guys are no use. Time for you guys to die”

Gran shouted coldly as he went into an attack posture. He was covered with a bloodthirsty aura while his skill was about to activate.

“You dirty bastards...”

Mapan gritted his teeth as he grasped the reality of the situation. Yet Mapan still had his ace up his sleeve. Weed! Weed would deal with them. From observing, Mapan knew that Weed was more than enough to fight against Gran. However, Weed still had a terrified look on his face. In that state, he wasn’t doing anything. He didn’t even pull out his sword.

‘Why...just why? Weed can easily to handle this...’

While Mapan thought something was wrong, Gran began his attack. But instead of attacking Weed or Mapan, he attacked

Margaux.

“Die!”

“Gran, I knew you would do this!”

Gran and Margaux started a fight to the death. Gran thought that he could kill Weed or Mapan at any time, so Margaux who was the most bothersome one had to die first. Since they had not trusted each other from the beginning, Margaux was prepared.

“Hah, Flame Sword!”

“Cold blade!”

The elements of Fire and Ice.

Gran, who had finished the examination for his second job advancement specialized in fire swordsmanship. Margaux, who specialized as an assassin could easily fade away in dark places. He struck while he remained hidden. Skills ran rampant, sparks flew and blood spewed forth. Their skills both leaned on the offensive side. Their skills were evenly matched, but Gran was the one who emerged victorious. As an assassin who was used surprise attacks, he couldn't beat a swordsman in a straightforward contest like this.

“Farewell, Margaux.”

“Dammit, I was so close, just a little bit further to that treasure...”

Though Margaux was betrayed, there were no hard feelings between them as he lay dying. Justice, friendship, they were not needed! They were useless for those who loved deceit and theft. Margaux was near death. Just then, Gran’s sword sliced off Margaux’s head.

“Muhahahaha! Now the treasure is all mine!”

Gran leaned back and laughed loudly. A shield dropped where Margaux had died.

“Weed-nim, Mapan-nim. One of you will hold the stone and go inside for me. In return I will give you this shield. Since it was used by a guy over level 200 it’s worth enough in return for dying. It’s better if you don’t reject my offer. Since I only need one person, I will be killing the other remaining person right now.”

In Gran’s head, the calculations were finished. When you enter, sacrifice one person and obtain the treasure. When returning, die once. As long as you weren’t really unlucky you would not drop the treasure. The possibility of dropping the treasure which you got from the dungeon was really low. In addition to that, it was okay to drop one of his items in return.

Gran was already savoring the joy of the treasure in his grasp. That was until Weed drew his sword.

Seureureung

The clay sword slipped softly out of its scabbard. In response, Gran's tone immediately changed from respecting to threatening.

“Whoa, you plan to defy me? If so, then die here, Mapan will guide me then. I may be considerably injured, but don't you know that you attacking me is nothing but amusing? Alright, I'll give you 3 seconds. Attack me as much as you want.”

“You have my thanks.”

A three second concession like out of a chivalric novel was something that Weed would not refuse.

“Your choice, have it the way you like it. Sculpting Blade!”

As the sword gathered light, a sense of insecurity showed in Gran's eyes.

‘Maybe I shouldn't have yielded? Yeah, I'll make it look like I'm giving him 3 seconds but I'll attack first!’

As Gran was in thought, Weed approached at an unimaginable speed and swung his sword, cutting off Gran's head.

“A Sculptor...”

Even to the moment of his death, an expression of disbelief covered his face. He was going to let Weed attack once and counterattack, but in that one attack had caused Gran's low HP to completely disappear.

Mapan let out a deep sigh. He had predicted as such, but now that the quartet were all dead, there was nothing to do.

“So what do we do now? Shall we go back now?”

“We've come this far so I'm going to find the treasure. Though it's questionable that the treasure exists.”

“How? Once you enter, you can't come out... If we die here they will revive before us.”

“That does not necessarily mean that you have to die. These people were novices when it came to exploring. They failed to choose the correct path even with the map. They even said a path is not always something that is set, but they still didn't understand their own words.”

“What do you mean?”

“Flying.”

Weed chanted a spell and pure white wings sprouted from his

back. Since the beginning, he had been confident in safely crossing over the Bar Khu mountain range. The reason why he was so confident lay in these wings. At the ‘Mirkan Tower’ of Lavias, with the payment of 10 gold, one could fly for the duration of one month. The power of flight lay in a special feather from the Avians.

Avoiding the falling lightning and thunderbolts, he flew to the opposite side. There he saw a small coffin and a thing that appeared to be a musical instrument, a harp.

‘This is must be the treasure...’

Weed took the musical instrument.

“Identify”

Item: Harp of Vino the Dwarf:

Durability: 20/20

Vino was a short and fat dwarf. But he loved a human woman.

It was a love exceeding race, a love that could never be fulfilled!

Human women disliked Dwarves, so Vino despaired. Thus he put all his effort into music.

Since music contained artistic beauty, and thus it could buy the favor of women.

Effect:

30% Rise in Female NPC popularity.

Weed looked at the harp, stunned. Eventually, his mouth broke into laughter.

“Puhahaha!”

Halman, Margaux, Levi, Gran.

For all their conspiracies of lies and killing, the treasure at the end was only a magical harp. It could have been stronger weapons, better armor, but no, it was an instrument to earn a woman's favor. The map had even indicated this fact even from the beginning.

Chapter 4: Van Hawk's Humiliation

Lee Hyun's computer was connected to a trading site that dealt in items. He would check the site for the common gold prices of trade goods almost every day, but this time it was for a specific reason.

“Absolutely amazing.”

Royal Road's popularity was increasing day by day. Although it was only last week, the listed number of registered items was around 160,000, and today it went over 165,000 items.

It wasn't that items went unsold, well, other than the absurdly high priced and unwanted items, almost all items from the previous week were sold.

The items that were sold were deleted from the list after a day it was sold, but more and more new items were being registered. Lee Hyun slowly rolled down the list of items.

“Looks like there's a lot of usable items this week.”

Item: Sword of Melain:

Durability: 105/105

Damage: 40-43

Sword is of a long sword style, made by mixing a small amount of mithril. A sword considered to possess superior strength; a blacksmith of some renown named Melain forged this item.

Restrictions:

Strength 200

Level 100

Equipped:

+50% Additional damage to the undead.

+25 Strength.

+17 Agility.

Item: Saikuri's Bracelet:

Durability: 40/40

A creative, yet eccentric magician named Saikuri was well versed in enchantment spells. He infused his wrist items which granted magical abilities; this item has become something that everyone on this continent desires.

Restrictions:

Level 150

Equiped:

+30% Maximum mana increased.

+20% Amplified magic effect.

+10 to all stats.

These kinds of items were very few and were coveted. Even Lee Hyun craved the weapons and accessories with special abilities.

‘How much?!’

The Melain black auction started at 1.5 million won. However, the prices continued to soar, currently exceeding 2.5 million won.

The weapon had no class criteria, and it could be used at relatively low levels. Because of this, the item was being sold at an expensive price.

Saikuri's Bracelet is a unique item that had a starting bid 3 million won, and its current price was more than 5 million won.

"It's a pie in the sky."

Lee Hyun could only lick his lips. From the start, he never planned to buy things from the auction site. Of course, in terms of investment he could buy an item and hunt with it. He had about 30 million won (about \$30,000 USD) he could use.

But by buying items, there was no end to spending money. In the end there are always better items, and the purpose of buying good items to farm is lost.

Lee Hyun decided to stop searching, and started writing a post for an auction. He wanted to sell the items he had obtained from hunting things in Lavias.

They were mainly the Death Knight's weapons, and the loot that he did not sell due to them being so unique, or of specific importance.

Among the loot, there were some items that were needed for quests, and those could be sold for cash. Most people would discard or sell them at the general stores, but Lee Hyun kept in mind that there were people who would buy them.

The length of an auction is one week. About 4 weeks of game time. Items dropped from the Death Knights.

Weed kept the best ones for himself, and set the price of the other items at 10,000 won as the starting bid. It was more advantageous to have more bidders in the auction as the competition for the item would rise.

As the competition heats up so to would the price rise, and there was no worry since the price will at least rise to the market price.

But for general loot, Weed set the minimum price as 3,000 won. If the item was worth any less than that it was not worth the trouble of auctioning it online.

The reason being, that it was simply a waste of time. Lee Hyun had registered more than 30 items on the auction site.

“Please rise in price...” he prayed.

He was anxious, as this was the first time he listed his own items from Royal Road for sale.

‘Now, I wonder how much will they rise?’

He knew that the price wouldn't rise just by wishing it, however, he couldn't help but be expectant that it would. Lee Hyun had the highest rating for the transaction site– a triple diamond rating.

With this rating he received 100 commission free transactions, and items he posted were shown where it would stand out the most. The items were displayed in the middle of the auction screen with a red box highlighting them.

“With this much, at least it won't be buried by other items.”

People started bidding on the Death Knight weapons with bids of 20,000 won and 30,000 won. Lee Hyun observed the auction for a moment before heading to the capsule to log into Royal Road.

The auction had a duration of one week, so it wasn't good to have any high expectations after posting.

The Arpenian Empire!

It was the first Empire to unite the continent of Versaille under one banner. However, after about 300 years, the glory of the Empire did not last and was eventually divided into dozens of smaller countries.

Since then, history has centered on Knights and their stories were written. Pretty much it's a history founded on blood and death!

The weak forces of principalities and minor countries allied to survive in this era of war. This was the story of the formation of the Britten Alliance.

In its early days, the seven kingdoms shared a strained atmosphere of distrust and suspicion; now the kingdoms have integrated into one through laws and regulations, as well as with arranged inter-marriages.

The lords of each nation can go to other countries and be treated with the same respect as they receive in their home countries. They also had a thriving economy.

Geographically, they were situated somewhat to the east of the center of the continent, and thus were able to prosper while avoiding major wars.

Born of these came the independent cities (Free imperial cities) formed by the merchants, so trade and technology were able to advance greatly.

Due to this reason, quite a number of users selected the Britten Alliance as their starting place.

Tomlin town.

It was located at the most eastern part of the Britten Alliance.

“Buying rabbit skins!”

“Anyone looking to hunt in Pestar Cave assemble here!”

“Cleric preferred. Level 50 priest or higher! Item drop allocation will be double the amount of a single person.”

A huge crowd gathered at the square. It was filled with users dressed in colorful clothing and equipment. There were also an astronomical number of merchants.

Britten Alliance is a Kingdom that is highly advanced in commercial trade, so a fair number of merchants came to trade here.

“You bought enough spices?”

“We’ve bought a lot of things cheaply, so I think we’ll make a huge profit this time!”

Tomlin village was visited primarily by the low level beginners, and the traders. With a variety of goods being sold and exchanged, many merchants frequently dropped by.

A wagon that was slowly approaching the east entrance of the village caught the attention of many onlookers.

“Huh? What’s that?”

“This doesn’t look very good...”

The wheels were wobbling as it was tumbling down the road, the condition of the canopy covering the wagon was almost a rag. The state of the wagon was not what garnered their attention, however. The real reason was that it was coming from the East.

Weed was carving away on the coachman’s seat, and Mapan also was sitting while working hard at his expense calculations.

Mapan’s ears were still covered because of Weed’s shouting as they crossed over the Bar Khu mountains. He had heard so much of the Lion’s Roar that he was near the point of neurosis.

Unlike the warrior’s war cry which put pressure on the enemy and enhanced stats, Lion’s Roar was a skill limited in its usefulness. The skill to raise the morale of an entire army, or bringing order in a military engagement, didn’t seem like it would see much use.

(P/R Neurosis: is a class of functional mental disorders involving distress but neither delusions nor hallucinations)

Even though Lion’s Roar was such a vague skill, it leveled very quickly. Once Weed yelled for a long time, the level of the skill climbed rapidly.

Weed raised the Lion’s Roar skill to Advanced Level 3. Thanks to

this, Mapan vowed to never go on a similar trip with a warrior.

“Really, there’s a lot more people here than I thought.”

This was Weed’s first impression of Tomlin Village. Despite the village being in the fringe areas of the East, there was a large number of players.

Because of this Weed finally felt the realization of the fact that they were in one of the central kingdoms, unlike the Rosenheim kingdom which was one of the frontier countries.

It took nearly one month of suffering to journey over the Bar Khu Mountains, to finally arrive at the Britten Alliance Kingdom. They met giant spiders, then basilisks, ogres, and loads of various other beasts on their way!

Once by the lakeside, Water demons had seized Weed by the ankle, and with their limbs and roots, attacked him fiercely.

Bar Khu Mountains truly had to be a heaven on earth for monsters. The first wave of Lycanthropes were not even half the size of the second wave. The Lycanthropes attacked in large groups, and they had to fight through them for over 10 hours before they were able to break free.

Even with these odds, Weed had crafted all of the jewels he had. In truth, intermediate sculpting does not rise easily, or by much, at this point.

Then, through sculpting he gained the new skill to facet gems. Yet, this type of crafting didn't even compare to sculpting wood since it gave 2 or 3 times the proficiency, and through it, sculpture mastery rose to level 4 intermediate.

But what was more pleasant than this, was that intermediate handicraft had finally rose to level 6. Since growth in handicraft skill is fueled by growth in sculpting and it affects many other skill areas, one could say handicraft is the second most important skill after sculpting.

“Weed, is this the first time you left Rosenheim Kingdom?”

“Yes.”

“I've been to other countries to meet a few friends, and I've noticed that the Rosenheim Kingdom has the least amount of people. Even the Kingdom of Brent to the north has more people.”

“It's because there are a lot of benefits to starting in a Kingdom with many people.” Weed replied.

If there is a pioneer, then there is bound to be information. And in the case of a special dungeon or a demon's lair, there was the notion of 'ownership'.

When a guild takes ownership, they have several advantages. Firstly, guild members have 20% additional experience, and non-

guild members in the dungeon could not enter outside of certain schedules. This was often the cause of many wars and friction between other guilds and other users.

This can be seen from the activity of the developed guilds in the Britten Alliance. The Siege of Fort Odein is one example.

‘It’s something that has little to do with me. We don’t have the time to deal with guilds fighting wars of pride.’

Weed and Mapan ignored the startled eyes and stares.

As startled eyes followed Weed and Mapan, which they still continued to ignore, their first order of business was to drive the wagon to the exchange. Because the exchange was in a rural village, it was relatively small. The owner was a nice old man.

“I came to sell a few things.”

Mapan began to speak, and the master of the exchange showed great joy.

“Yes? A lot of traders come by these days. It is greatly appreciated. What kind of goods do you have for sale?”

One by one, Mapan pulled out all of the cheese and bottles of olive oil from the wagon.

“These items are for sale.”

“Oh my! Those are from Rosenheim Kingdom, aren’t they? Coming from so far away, I’ll pay 4 silvers and 8 silvers respectively for each.”

Mapan felt conflicted for a moment, tightly closed his eyes, and sold them all. Until now, the entire journey in the wagon was just short of revolting because it was loaded with the smell of cheese and olive oil.

Every time the wagon hit a bump his stomach lurched; Royal Road’s outstanding realism rather felt more of a drudgery to Mapan.

“I am grateful. These are hard to find in this town, 470 gold should be enough.”

“My pleasure!”

Through the transaction, Mapan’s profit was about 200 gold as well as a little rise in fame and expertise. At last, the month long trip was worthwhile in the end!

After all, the greatest happiness as a merchant is the feel of success and the satisfaction you obtain from the wealth after a long haul.

Next was Weed’s turn.

Mapan looked at Weed with eyes full of envy. Since groceries reap this much profit, I wonder how much more profit will be gained from jewellery.

‘The gems Weed directly faceted and formed into jewelry...’

Mapan gulped.

Weed opened the backpack, and one by one pulled out brooches and bracelets.

“How much would you pay for these?”

At that moment, the exchange was filled with the sound of user’s comments.

“It’s a jade!”

“Those are jewels. That one is an emerald... if I’m not mistaken, that must be a sapphire!”

“Where did they find those precious stones?”

“It’s so beautiful...”

The reaction was hardly surprising. Traders who come to the

Tomlin exchange are people who were relatively low leveled, and this would be the first time for the majority of them to have seen jewelry.

The exchange owner looked carefully at the jewels Weed passed forward, and he expressed disapproval.

“Things like this are impossible to sell in a small town like this! How about you go to a large city?”

Mapan gave a helpful comment.

“Jewelry is classified as a luxury; rather than selling in a small town, it would be profitable to sell it in a large city with developed commerce. Maybe it would be better to sell directly to the jewelry stores rather than to the exchange, since they would give a better price.”

“Is that so?”

Weed put the jewels back into the bag. Anyway, they did not necessarily need to sell them in Tomlin at this moment.

Each and every town or city had a different value on jewelry, so Weed had taken out the jewels to examine the current market for jewels in the Britten Alliance.

After filling the cart with other goods purchased with money from selling food, they finished everything they wanted to do at

Tomlin village.

Even after the two men rode slowly westward in the rickety wagon, and were gone, their visit to the merchant in Tomlin village became a hot topic.

“If the exchange in the town could not afford it, how expensive might they be?”

“For that handcrafted jewelry, I’d wager they would fetch a really high price!”

“Where on earth did those people come from?”

“East! But there is only the Bar Khu Mountain range in that direction...”

“No way! They passed through the Bar Khu Mountain range?”

“Rosenheim Kingdom! The jewels are probably imported from the Rosenheim Kingdom, but where did they get crafted...”

*

After a few days, Weed and Mapan arrived at the capital of an ally of the Britten Alliance, Castle Regus of the Keuroin Kingdom.

In the broad, plain sight in front of a castle, beginner monsters such as rabbits and foxes moved about as users pursued them with determination.

Leisurely, Mapan spoke, “That’s a very peaceful scene.”

“Yeah,” Weed was also in agreement. After being used to the bloodthirsty encounters with monsters in the Bar Khu Mountains, the little rabbits and foxes looked cute in comparison.

The sky was blue with white clouds passing by. The sun was warm, and golden fields of grain as far as the eyes can see. Regus Castle, constructed with red bricks to match the scenery, was incomparably beautiful in comparison to Serabourg in the Kingdom of Rosenheim.

Looking at such a peaceful sight, you almost feel like writing a poem.

Ting

Art has risen by 2 points (+2 ART)

The art stat didn’t only rise when making artwork, but it also

rose by seeing beautiful things while traveling.

Keuroin Kingdom, the kingdom with the most travelers!

Here, the extreme beauty of the town and castle brings many visitors. A famous resort regarded as a place for couples to date and others to enjoy vacation.

Weed and Mapan enjoyed the moment of relaxation for a while. In the meantime, Mapan was cleansing himself of his fatigue and suffering, but Weed with keen eyes analyzed the castle.

‘A castle like this would be a good model to make a sculpture out of. There would probably be many people willing to buy it. I wonder how much my sculpting will rise by?’

Weed took in the shapes of the spires and the heights of the ramparts; he roughly sketched as he walked along the interior.

A sculptor’s instinct.

Anything he views he absorbs fully in memory.

Weed and Mapan reached the front of the city gates. Mapan dragged forward the horse drawn wagon.

“I’ll go in first.”

There were two ways to enter a castle. One was entering through the front gate. Of course, this was where Mapan chose to go. But the armed guards stopped him.

“Here’s the toll payment. And I also need a trade permit.”

Mapan threw 2 gold to the guards without any hesitation. After earning a considerable amount of money by trading in the previous village, 2 gold was nothing.

“Welcome, merchant.”

The guards prostrated themselves as if in front of nobility, and they opened the gate. All castles have large gates where it’s usually closed, but they open to people who pay gold!

This spirit! The excitement!

“Wow, incredible!”

“That person just gave out 2 gold without a second thought.”

Nearby users were commenting with interest. Around the castle, the beginner players that were hunting small animals were shocked. Mapan just shrugged.

“Hey Weed, come on in!”

In a minute, Weed headed toward the side door. The small door was bored into the side of the main gate; however, this time the armed guards directly prevented him.

“Stop! You are not a citizen of the Alliance. What brings you to Regus castle?”

Just by looking at people, the guards could tell where they were from. Although he was from Rosenheim Kingdom, it was not a simple procedure to visit the capital of a foreign country, as it needs to be reported.

If the incident was not reported, there is the possibility of becoming a wanted man with the authorities.

“I am here to trade, and to sell handmade goods, honorable guards!”

“Yes? If that is so, you need to pay a toll in accordance to our country’s laws.”

“A toll for passage?”

Weed immediately began to praise the guards for their efforts with a friendly smile.

“It’s admirable to see that the Regus castle guards enforce such tight security, it really is unequaled.”

“W-Well, of course! Hahaha!” The simple guards laughed.

Weed had already mastered how to fully deal with soldiers through the experience with the instructor at the training center.

“It’s hard, right? But to keep such a great castle safe seems to be a great honor. Is everyone stopped to keep the castle safe?”

“Why yes. If you come to the castle for trade, you still have to pay the toll.”

“How much is the toll for passage? Because all the money I have is 7 silver...”

“That is sufficient. The toll will be 5 silver.”

Weed’s face went stiff for a short moment. And he pulled 4 silver out of his pocket.

“Oh! I only have 4 silver...”

“...”

As Weed and Mapan entered the city of Regus, they decided to go their own way to do their business.

“I’ll stop by the exchange and see if I can purchase loot. Maybe I’ll find something to do. Then after one day I’ll meet you back here.”

Merchants have their own unique quests. Commonly they are called story procurement commissions. How to get some different goods, or requests, or even entrusted to transport particular items.

“Well...”

Weed parted with Mapan and made his first priority to look for a jewelry shop around the busier streets. Of course, this was in order to sell the jewels.

Regus castle, the capital of Keuroin Kingdom was a flourishing city, so it was not difficult to find a jewelry store.

First and second floor.

The jewellery store ran a business on two floors that were packed with the nobility. Users like to buy gems for items with sockets. If you combine those items with gemstones, special characteristics could emerge.

“What are you interested in buying?”

Weed was greeted by the shop dealer. A woman! The elegant beauty was the NPC of the jewellery store.

“I came here to sell.”

Weed took out the gems from his backpack. The various kinds of gemstones shined brightly. These were the deeply green emeralds, dark blue sapphires and pearls.

“Wow, they’re gems.”

“I think I’ve never seen so many gems.”

It was not very different from the reaction in Tomlin village. After viewing the dealer weighed the jewels and proposed a deal.

“Oh, I think I could give you 2900 gold for this! But wait, you are a famous adventurer and you have a related profession to this business, it would be proper to pay you 3200 gold.”

At the capital he had spent 1,700 gold, and in just a moment it had almost doubled his profits of over 3000 gold! It seems that gemstones from Rosenheim Kingdom are bought for a cheap price, and were then processed and sold as highly expensive jewellery in Keuroin kingdom.

‘So this is a profit of 1500 gold?! Considering the traveling time and effort of crafting, I would say this is a huge profit!’

The experience and the money of hunting for one month were

given up. There was also the risk of losing the trade goods so the profits weren't gained for nothing.

At this point, if you were a merchant you would bargain. Depending on your trading skills, you could sell things for a higher price; Weed, however, was not a merchant. So instead he pulled out the harp.

Ttiriring, Ding, ttingtting~

It was a secret weapon to improve impression with woman NPC. A bard, or a harpist, has the power to charm people through a performance. It elicits favor and goodwill, and lowers prices.

At a high level, a bard can earn the love of the masses and be a guest at inns or restaurants for no charge.

“Wow! That guy is playing the harp.”

“He's decent.”

“It sounds pretty good.”

Weed's performance was basic, but it was not bad. He deliberately set aside some of his spare time to learn it and added one more thing to his trade since he was the jack of all trades.

Ting

By listening to the performance, the NPC's impression of you has increased.

Weeds mouth curved into a smile. The shop dealer's eyes were gently closed, in appreciation of the music. His objective was achieved. However as the dealer opened her eyes, she said, "The music is good, but the song is lacking since there is no singing."

"Singing?"

"Yes. You can sing can't you?"

Weed could not bear to refuse. A roaring rocker!

In real life, it was once upon a time a goal of his. Yet, he ignored things that a rocker could not ignore. Ignorance of pitch! Ignorance of tempo! Ignorance of lyrics! In other words, he was awful!

He was what people would call severely tone-deaf! Only Weed had never accepted that fact. So as he plucked the harp, Weed began to sing.

“It’s bright! The sun rises today! Return again! It’s sunny! And! It’s up! Courtyard! Day!”

“Kkyaaa!”

“It’s driving me mad!”

“Run away!”

Really, what is the difference between the Lion’s roar skill and singing a song?

Weed’s singing made the users become both shocked and horrified. If you only listened for a little bit, the head becomes dizzy and your breathing becomes labored. It becomes uncomfortable to the point it feels like your insides might come out.

“One day! Your thoughts! Walk down! Look! The! S – K – Y~!”

Weed bellowed eagerly as he sang. There was no melody. There was only noise. As if singing in a loud voice is the best way to sing a song.

When Weed finally finished the song and the stampeding crowd users got out, only the store owner was left. Her expression was turned to stone.

“How much will you give?”

She shook her head as Weed spoke.

“No trade.”

“...!?”

“Get lost! Otherwise, I’m calling the guards.”

“I have to play the harp again...”

He had to give up singing. Weed played the harp again with much effort and raised the impression of the shop dealer.

“I’ll give you 3240 gold.”

“That’s fine.”

Weed with a light heart, sold the gems, and departed with 3240 gold.

Ting

You have reaped a large profit through trading!

Fame has risen by 150 points (+150 FAME)

Weed's reputation rose again.

‘From this, I now have over 2000 fame...’

The higher your fame, the higher difficulty of quests you can receive, and it was possible to receive discounts on items. However, fame in itself is worth being proud of.

“Do you know of Corona? That guy did some extraordinary work. He took out a twin headed ogre in the Hwaryong (Fire Dragon?) mountain range.”

“A thief named Batun safely accomplished the Archduke Samiel's request. Archduke Samiel gave him a knighthood and a position in the military.”

This is the power of fame.

Sometimes, after finishing a major quest or taking out a difficult monster, the NPCs started to spread stories about it.

It is the same with merchants when they gained large profits from a trade. In Royal Road, you can become very famous through NPCs gossip.

“Have you ever seen the swordsman Bansen? If you see him, be careful. He is committing murder indiscriminately at random. Even a bounty has been placed on his head!”

Of course, sometimes you can become infamous in the way of notoriety. In Weed’s case, after creating a statue in the town of Freya, he became a celebrity there.

Having finished his business at the jewelry store, Weed headed straight for the appraisal shop to appraise the value of the Crimson Necklace of Life he had obtained at Lavias.

Weed was interested in its ability, but his identify skill was too low a level to identify it. When he first picked it up, the necklace was somewhat white in color.

Yet, it was named the Crimson Necklace of life. The color remained unchanged when he met Mapan. Then as he crossed the Bar Khu Mountains, it began to gradually change. Now it was fully crimson.

The thought of discarding or selling this item made Weed uneasy. This might cost him money, but he still decided to go to the appraisal shop to find out what this item really was.

‘If this is a crappy item, I’m going to smash it.’

Many users looking for identification services crowded the shop.

“Here, please identify this item I picked up from hunting!”

“OK, this ring has the property of...”

There wasn’t another place like this in the marketplace. Taking unidentified items for identification can be like scratching off lottery tickets.

You don’t know how it will end up. Who knows? One might even obtain a tremendously unique item. Weed went through the first floor and immediately went up the stairs to the second floor.

The first floor was for simple checking of items, and with Weed’s identification skills, he could do a decent identification check.

There were a considerable number of users upstairs. Weed hesitated for a short moment, but decided to move on. Since Weed had been able to identify all items so far, he firmly believed that the item was not common.

Finally, Weed came to the third floor, the top layer of the building. The rooms were completely sealed. It was to thoroughly guarantee confidentiality. Weed went into one of the rooms.

“Welcome!” The blond female wizard greeted Weed enthusiastically.

‘She’s a user.’

In general, when you cannot get out of the castle for those 4 weeks, users can experience a wide range of quests. Weed had strengthened himself by beating the scarecrow, but that occurrence was extremely rare.

Most users spread out to do things like side jobs at an inn, order books from the bookstore, or even improve manufacturing skills.

But for users who chose the wizard route, most of them work with identification. Judging an item’s magical properties can improve your skills, and if you’re lucky you can earn a significant amount of money.

*

‘Dang! How could I be lacking in 3 gold just at that time!’

Wizard Lindell had raised her level to 200 and she had just finished her second job advancement. Upon the job advancement, a wizard is able to learn a new spell.

Lindell who specialized in lightning magic chose the spell lightning shower. Numerous bolts of lightning fall from the sky with beautiful effects and can inflict great damage on monsters,

making it a very useful skill.

However, the price of the skill book was a whopping 540 gold!

Even after finishing the second job advancement, a poor wizard could not have that kind of money. When you are a low level, you need to buy various magical amplifiers, the reagents for spells, and as your level raises little by little, you need to buy all the skill books, then there is your robes, the staff and equipment etc etc.

On the battleground, it may be the most colorful and shining profession, but wizards always have to live in poverty. There was no choice for her but to work part time in item identification in order to get the 3 extra gold needed to buy the skill book she wanted.

But ever since the first customer, the experience has been terrible. Lindell's tender forehead was covered with wrinkles from the stress.

‘Why is there a beggar here?’

As soon as she saw Weed's appearance, that was what came to mind.

‘He should go wash up.’

Lindell could not believe her eyes.

Talk about low quality, torn cloak and shabby armor. The durability had decreased and the leather had lost its luster, and the peculiar equipment seemed like a dust cloth. There could hardly be an outfit even more bizarre.

His back behind his shoulder was an unknown mesh bag, but it smelled repulsive. It was the strong smell of medicinal herbs.

Aside from her thoughts, Lindell forcibly smiled and spoke to the guest. Being unkind to customers is grounds for being kicked out from the identification store, and gone is her feasible way to raise money.

“I am sorry, but this place is for the identification of rare and high quality items. General identification of magical items is downstairs.”

It is the same wherever you are, people are judged by their attire. An NPC would react based on your fame, but it is different for a user like Lindell. Without any comment, Weed pulled out the necklace and held it out to her.

“Please determine this.”

“The price is expensive. To do an identification, the charge is 50 silver.”

Though the money was precious, his decision was already made

at this point.

“Here it is, 50 silver.”

“Oh, so you are going through with it. Do not regret your choice when the item is listed as meager.”

Lindell went over the precautions. Among items that you discover through identification skill you can get good things as they expected, but realistically the item is often much more disappointing.

Because identifying can lead to this, some people will be firm in refusing to pay, so she warned people to pay in advance. Lindell took hold of the necklace. From then on, she noted what seemed to be an unusual flow of mana.

A type of magical flow that even as a wizard she couldn't determine!

That means it contains at least 4 magic circles or more. But, her extremely high identification skill should be able to see what the magic is.

“Identify”

Lindell's hands shined as she touched the Crimson necklace of life, and the information of the item was revealed.

Ting

Item: Necklace of the Death Knight:

Durability: 100/100

A summoning item crafted by the Warlock of Darkness, Barkhan Demoph!

This necklace contains the life of the Death Knight, Van Hawk. With this item, you can summon Van Hawk; however, changing his loyalty from his Lord Barkhan to your own will not be easy.

Restrictions:

If one is not deemed worthy as a master, he will be attacked.

Enchantment:

‘Call Death Knight’

Equipped:

Summons Death Knight.

+50% Effects of black magic.

+20 Intellect

+10 Wisdom

Lindell’s eyes were wide open with shock.

“Th-This is a unique item that has not been made public yet...”

“Please return it.”

Weed’s necklace was identified, so he left the appraisal shop.

*

After finishing their errands, Weed and Mapan left Regus castle and headed toward Somren Liberty City.

Weed asked Mapan to stop the wagon at a deserted place.

“What’s going on?”

“Just watch and you will see.”

Weed jumped from the coachman's seat. He held out the necklaced and chanted the spell.

“Summon Death Knight!”

At once, black smoke gathered and within appeared the Death Knight, Van Hawk. The boss of the Barkhan catacombs.

“Keueoeoeo!”

Just the same as before, except that the clothes had changed quite a bit. His appearance in the Barkhan catacombs, Van Hawk had had great items and equipment.

But now the Death Knight is wearing only a basic sword and equipment. The reason was simple; it was because Weed had already stolen it all.

The Death Knight's body faltered from the bright light, but he soon found his balance. Since he is a level 200 undead monster, the sun caused such a big reaction to him. The Death Knight's vision brushed past Mapan, and his eyes rested on Weed.

“You human!” He roared at Weed.

His eyes burned with hatred. The overflowing killing intent could be felt. The Death Knight clearly remembered it was Weed who had killed him.

“You summoned me! You believe I will betray Lord Barkhan and follow you? Huhu! You’re only a sculptor! I’ll kill you, human!”

The Death Knight assaulted him. Weed intentionally took the hit and slowly his blood spilled. Then since his health was reduced to less than 20%, he used his skills.

“Sculpting Blade!”

Weed’s sword went through the Death Knight repeatedly.

The Death Knight was recalled and the necklace changed back to white. As more monsters with life are killed, the necklace will turn back to crimson.

It began from that time on. On the road to Somren Liberty City, every time the necklace turned red, he called back the Death Knight.

“Sculpting Blade!”

“Seven Celestial Steps!”

Eagerly he used the skills to kill the Death Knight!

It never left his hands as he was establishing a record. Kill him, return him to life, then kill him again, and again, and again!

For the Death Knight it was an outrageous thing to be subjected to. However, this was a desirable result for Weed. During his sculpting on the wagon Weed usually had full mana and health.

With satiety he didn't need to have it at 100% and could control it, but the recovering health and mana at full was a waste.

However, he could always recall the Death Knight, so it could not be any better. Even if he cannot get experience due to it being a summon, he could still continuously improve his skill mastery.

After the tenth time of beating him to death, it was the first time the Death Knight sounded ill.

“Ugh, you are strong...”

When he died five times more, the Death Knight heaved a sigh.

“I seem to forget Lord Barkhan's grace little by little.”

And again he died about five times more, he spoke more drastically.

“It seems your leadership qualifies you to rule over me, but I do

not know yet.”

After that, he was killed twenty more times. By this point Weed didn't even bother to keep count. Whenever Weed's health and mana reached 100%, he called the Death Knight to fight.

The vitality of the necklace he held filled quickly with a little aid. The Death Knight has finally announced his intention to yield.

“Master!”

The Lone Death Knight! The strongest Death Knight, Van Hawk, recognized Weed as his master. However, Weed's answer was unexpected.

“No, I cannot trust you. Since you are the servant of the evil warlock, you must be planning something!”

“No, it's not like that...”

Weed did not listen to the Death Knight and killed him another 300 times.

“I will serve you master, so please...”

Even after he heard this, he killed him about 500 more times.

From then on, whenever the Death Knight appeared, he appealed desperately, but to no avail. Weed's goal was to help master his skills, so there could be no mercy.

Chapter 5: Return The Holy Relic

Weed put the Death Knight items up for sale at a price between 10 to 15 thousand won.

“I don’t think the price is going to be that high, it’s not incredible equipment...”

Level 200 weapons.

Royal Road had many armor and weapons, which all had their own names. Some monsters even had a lot of silver and loot, so this meant a lot of different types of gear.

This was true in other games as well.

High level monsters would drop weapons that could be sold for cash.

Lee Hyun sighed, as he couldn’t find such items easily. Unique, rare, and magic items could be sold online for a decent price.

Loot for quests sometimes sold for unexpectedly high prices, ranging from 30,000 to 50,000 won.

The prices were high because of the users demand for them.

In Royal Road, the appearance of monsters was very realistic and detail oriented. For example, the rotten corpses of monsters stank fiercely.

Not many people could hunt with the smell.

Undead monsters!

They were among the most avoided hunting locations.

Because people were unwilling to hunt the undead, the price for quest items from them increased due to their scarcity. Thanks to this It wasn't unusual that their these items would be sold at ridiculously expensive prices.

“In total, it must hit at least 2.96 million won.”

Then he looked at the e-mail he had ignored earlier.

The Dark Gamers invitation!

He read the email which said that the invitations were only sent to those that were chosen, and apparently Lee Hyun was chosen to join in their meetings.

Such was the content of the invitation.

A skeleton holding money in one hand was pictured on the site's background.

“It's...”

The Dark Gamers' Union.

There were rumors about this famous organization, but the truth was unclear.

“It's probably not them and it's got nothing to do with me.”

Lee Hyun clicked the trading site to confirm the bid. After sending a PM to the buyer, they decided on a trading location.

They decided to have the trade a day later.

The Free City of Somren had characteristics that were well suited to a feudal lord, where there were few taxes and tariffs.

Thanks to that, many traders and adventurers stayed here. Most of the group of general users was always looking for better weapons.

In other places, the purchase price in stores included the taxes, but in Liberty City, the tax price was very cheap.

The city was a paradise for merchants.

Weed and Mapan arrived at the city at the last day remaining of the time limit for the quest.

“Then I’ll be trading over there.”

Mapan left to go sell the loot.

There had been an incredible amount of monsters in the Bar Khu Mountains. Over the course of a month, the wagon was filled with loot.

A merchant’s inspiration was the excitement achieved through trading. It was a pleasure to sell in bulk and to buy expensive things at cheaper rates.

Mapan realized the pleasure of trading.

That was the benefit of accompanying Weed.

The luxury of trading without taxes!

‘Coming to Free City of Somren wasn’t so bad.’

Weed checked inside his backpack for the Helain Cup again.

The purpose of coming here was just about to be completed...

The quest to return the holy relic to the Order of Freya.

Rather than heading to the church immediately, Weed went to the central fountain and looked around.

Liberty City was crowded with a tremendous amount of merchants.

They had opened stalls to sell stuff and were trying hard to find customers.

“I can repair any damaged items to maximum durability!”

“Selling food that recovers satiety.”

“Silk clothing for sale with +15 electrical magic resistance directly made to order.”

“Check out the various weapons and armors that I have made.”

“Get jewelry with various attributes for only 1 gold!”

Craftsman characters occupied one spot on the fountain for selling stuff.

“How much?”

“I came to pick up the clothes I ordered yesterday.”

“100 pieces of bread, please.”

The craftsman classes were treated the same as before.

Every day they sold near the fountain. The main classes like miners, blacksmiths, and tailors sold their goods around the fountain.

All sorts of other crafting classes were quietly buried off in a corner.

“This is fun, people gathering like this...”

Blacksmiths and Enchanters engaged in fierce competition with each other.

This sight couldn't be called unfamiliar for Weed.

He had always had less competition when selling sculptures.

Down the eastern side of the square was a large red wooden building.

Weed headed to the location of the appointment he had made with buyers. There were more than 10 people there waiting.

“I’m here to sell.” Weed said to see their reaction.

People bought stuff from item trading sites.

Just say the name and the transaction number and you would receive the item.

“I’ve waited so long for this. This quest was so hard to do. I couldn’t fight against those undead monsters.”

“Thank you. It’s good to see that someone is selling a lot of the items.” With those words, the buyers left.

Aside from the Dark Knight’s weapon, the rest of the items were sold for loot quests.

At dawn, his backpack was much lighter.

“This is the first profit from Royal Road.”

Weed was comfortable with the result and headed to the church.

The church of the Goddess Freya had been built with white marble, a symbol of beauty and prosperity. It had been built in the

heart of the city and thus was easy to find.

The Free City of Somren was built next to the Somren River.

There was a white arched bridge built near the church building of Freya. Many users wanted to get holy water, a type of blessing, so the area all around the temple was always crowded.

In the distance, clerics and paladins were going in and out of the temple.

Whenever they raised their levels and learned new techniques and whenever they returned to the church, they would receive contribution.

Weed went inside, passing a little statue of the goddess with golden letters written on her.

‘Collection box, pay at least 10 silvers or more...’

Weed wanted to turn around and leave without paying.

“May the grace of the Goddess Freya be with you.”

Those that donated received a blessing from the priests.

The church’s Holy Spirit Blessing would increase defense for a

period of time, as well as increasing health regeneration by 5.

It was the church's main source of income.

“Get outta my way real quick.”

“I think he was the last person in line.”

Weed paused temporarily since the users who had been waiting in line started complaining.

Waiting for turn to receive the blessing was a rule that the priests made the people adhere to.

Weed was here to return the Helain Cup to the priest and did not want to give an excuse to the complaints that were erupting from the crowd.

“I am here to return something.”

“Yes?”

The priest blinked when he saw the Helain Cup. Then a look of surprise came upon his face and he shouted in a loud voice.

“Oh, thank the Holy Goddess you're here! This is a miracle! Come right this way, inside the High Priest will meet you.”

The surrounding temple priests took Weed inside. All the users gathered to receive the blessings were left alone because of priest scarceness.

“What the hell...”

“What the hell’s going on?”

The Inner Sanctum.

The High Priest’s room.

It was a place filled with symbolic murals and statues of the goddess, a solemn and noble atmosphere.

Here, Weed was able to return the Helain Cup. Kneeling down on one knee like the knights from the Middle Ages, he said.

“I have, on behalf of Prospects, brought the Helain Cup here.”

“Oh, this is it! How magnificent!”

The High Priest, his face full of wrinkles, was ecstatic as he held up the Helain Cup.

Ting

Quest Completed: Deliver Helain's Grail:

The lost Helain Cup has been returned to the Church of Freya. Barkhan's past efforts to lead the Immortal Legions to war devastated the entire continent.

Even with the beauty and prosperity of the Church of Freya, they could not have covered the post war damages. But now, through the holy water from the Helain Cup, reconstruction can resume.

By fulfilling the related quest, the public value of religious groups has increased to fight against evil.

Fame has risen by 400 points (+400 FAME)

Your friendship with the Church of Freya has reached 15 points

Public value of the Church of Freya has increased by 1200 points

The Church's religious public value can be seen in the window.

Current Church of Freya's Public Value: 1490

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

‘This is amazing!’ Weed thought while kneeling down.

The rewards from completing a quest from one of the three main churches had always been good.

But normally not this good!

But this was the not the end. The High Priest sat down in his chair and looked over to Weed.

He said to a Paladin.

“As compensation to this great warrior, bring the Paladin equipment and the Sword of Agatha.”

“Yes, High Priest.”

After a while they came out with a Paladin’s armor and a sword on a red cloth.

“Take it.”

The Paladin gear was laid down in the red cloth in front on Weed.

The High Priest handpicked the items in the cloth.

Items earned as compensation for the quest.

Weed was moved to tears.

It was a happy moment for him. But at a time like this, you had to maintain composure.

‘I have never been this lucky in Royal Road! I cannot rejoice just yet...’

Weed decided not to prostrate and began checking the items.

Do not put off what needs to be done until tomorrow when what you could do today, like immediately identifying something.

First was the sword, together with an antiquely engraved

scabbard.

“Identify”

Item: Agatha’s Holy Sword:

Durability: 130/130

Damage: 55-60

A sword of the Church of Freya made by the Dwarven Blacksmith Roban, which boasts superior strength. Many types of metal, like steel and mithril, were forged together. However, the damage is weak because of the materials used to preserve the dignity of the church.

This is a gift from the High Priest.

Restriction:

Level 130

Equipped:

+30 Strength

+20 Agility

+100 Faith

+200% extra damage against undead.

+200% Injury recovery speed

Holy blessing can be used to bless yourself five times a day.

2 hours cool down in between each blessing.

To avoid startling the High Priest and the Paladins, Weed quietly admired the items.

‘This is much nicer than the Death Knight’s sword.’

It was usually better to have items with higher stats. But sometimes it was useful to have items with low requirements.

The Clay Sword was such a case. It was difficult to sell for a lot of money, but because there were few prerequisites, it was the perfect weapon for low level characters and could be sold for a higher price. A Clay Sword was the absolute weapon against rabbits and

raccoons.

“Identify”

Item: Rose engraved gloves:

Durability: 90/90

Defense: 20

The official gloves of the Paladins of Freya.

Covering your wrist might seem very uncomfortable but they, in fact, were made to move stuff.

Restriction:

Level 200

Equipped:

+50 Faith

+20 Strength

+5 Agility

Damage from Black Magic reduced by 50%.

“Identify”

Item: Ring of the High Priest:

Durability: 100/100

A small diamond was embedded in the center of the ring. A course design but it is not available on the market.

Restrictions:

Not equippable by Warlock, Assassin or Rogue classes.

Not equippable when in murderer state.

Equipped:

The High Priest's Blessing can be used once a day.

+150 Fame

+200 Faith

Weed had difficulty breathing.

“Such a windfall of items...”

Up until now, he sparingly used those bloody, old gloves in order to conserve the durability, but now he no longer seemed to need them.

At level 200, his gear would all be set except the helmet.

‘A very wholesome reward, indeed.’

Weed got up from kneeling and then on the spot, put one hand on his chest and made a slight bow with his waist.

“Now that I have done my duty, I will take my leave.”

It was time to go to the item trading site to check prices. First, he would look for a better sword as a replacement and then sell the

Sword of Agatha.

However, the High priest looked up into the air. Clear tears were running down his cheeks.

“Brave warrior, you have shown your courage by defeating Barkhan’s evil servant and retrieving the Helain Cup.”

“...?”

Suddenly the High Priest was glaring.

‘Barkhan stole the holy relics of the church and had them hidden by his servants.’

Weed decided to stay after looking at the Priest and paladins.

Weed did not know in the slightest of the increase in the familiarity he had gained with the church.

Weed replied as he hurriedly got down on one knee again.

“Yes.”

“Did you know? Our church has lost one more holy relic.”

“Yes?” Weed was puzzled for a moment.

When he got the Helain Cup, he had collected information from the Royal Road website.

The Church of Freya had three artifacts: the Helain Cup, a sacred cup of flowing holy water, Fargo's crown of prosperity, and the Rending Sword.

"But..."

Weed noticed the white, rosewood-painted hat that the High Priest was wearing.

It was not the Holy Crown of Fargo.

"How did they dare to, in a time of chaos, have the undead steal the crown. Beings that are alive despite the fact that their death is contrary to the will of the Goddess." The High Priest said in his fury.

Then Weed instinctively replied. "You're absolutely right..."

"Those undead dare to endanger our peaceful land!"

"I wish to restore the peace and progress of the continent."

It was always good to get to know secrets.

It was the effects of blame. Thanks to it, the relationships between humans did not disappear permanently.

“The monsters of the Versailles continent deserve to disappear from under the Goddess’ eyes. The undead must be defeated for the era of prosperity to dominate the continent.”

“Yes, I agree as well.”

Weed then told the High Priest the story of what happened in Baran village, of the time the Lizardmen had invaded the village.

Thereafter he had been asked to sculpt the statue of the Goddess Freya in the form he considered the most beautiful.

Through the sculpture the possibility of another invasion through Lizardmen was diminished, leading to flourishing of the village.

“Oh, I heard the story about that sculptor! So it was you!”

The High Priest was impressed with the Statue of the Goddess Freya.

“Fortunately we were able to determine the identity of the one that stole the Crown of Fargo. We dispatched knights over three times, but to no avail. I believe that it would be better if you were

to lead the attack instead.”

Ting

Quest: Locate and return the Crown of Fargo:

The Church of Freya spares nothing to reclaim the Holy Relics. As a result, they have received information that the True Blood Clan of the Vampires has taken the crown to the town of Morata. The High Priest dispatched three groups of Paladins to recover the crown but all of them have failed to return. They have been turned to stone by a curse. Save the Paladins and retrieve the crown.

Difficulty: B

Reward:

Unknown

Warning:

Church of Freya’s public value becomes zero upon failure

Fame decreases by -1000

Rewarded Items will be taken back

The quest-rewards were colossal in chain quests, and the rewards increased with each successive mission. Weed cheerfully read the contents of the quest but then his expression changed.

Barkhan Demoph had shown the strength of his minions.

His army had waged war against both the powerful kingdoms and churches. Especially the powerful True Blood Clan Vampires.

The clan counted more than one thousand members and the lowest level a vampire had was 270. The head of the True Blood Clan, Tori, the leader of the True Blood Clan, was a known boss monster with a level of 400. It didn't matter how strong Weed was right now, since no user was even close to reaching level 400.

‘It's going to be an absurd task to fight the True Blood Vampire Clan and bring back the Crown of Fargo...’

Weed looked at the difficulty level.

‘Difficulty B! Not to mention that they've dispatched three groups of Paladins that have also failed the quest. I can't possibly complete it.’

You couldn't clear this kind of difficulty level without forming a party with the most powerful users. No matter how high the rewards were, this fact remained unchanged.

"I'm sorry. I believe it would be tough to complete this mission with my lack of ability."

It was inevitable since he couldn't hope to complete the quest. He could only refuse.

But the High Priest smiled gently.

"You are far too modest, but that is not necessary. I leave this request to you."

"No. I cannot accept this request."

"There is no need to be too modest. A famous adventurer such as yourself is perfect for this kind of mission."

Weed wanted to cry when he heard the words of the High Priest. To have humility misunderstood so much that it would result in a tragic ending.

'Blindly put... intimacy of relationship.'

Because of the high reliability, the High Priest believed in him.

To make matters worse, the High Priest did not give up.

“In the legends, stories have been passed down in the church that when the church’s influence falls, a Hero will appear before a coming war and reclaim the lost treasures. You are that Hero!”

Weed could feel his ears failing when he heard the High Priest say this outlandish legend.

Then he heard a familiar sound.

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

Weed hurriedly checked the quest and it was the B rank difficulty quest in the quest window.

‘The quest is forced on the person who finds the Helain Cup? I can’t help it then. Maybe a chance will appear’

His judgment was shrewd and fast, but realistic. There was always an opportunity to live.

However, the High Priest plunged him further into despair with his next bout of words, and there was no room to escape.

“Twenty years ago, the Paladins had managed to make teleport gates and also succeeded in setting up the last one to Morata. With this teleport gate, one can be moved instantly without needing to travel.”

“So you’re saying...”

Weed’s lip trembled slightly.

“It is urgent and you must not delay any further. You will be departing tomorrow at this time and one priest will be sent to accompany you and aid in your mission. He will play an important role in saving our brothers and children that have been petrified by the vampires.”

Chapter 6: A Bad Cold

A single day...

Far too little time to prepare!

“Buying armor and weapons. Buying for less than 1 gold coin.”

“Looking to buy an unlimited amount of herbs and food materials. Please sell them cheap.”

Weed bought these items in great numbers.

Mapan had left his party and Weed could understand the reason why.

“I’m going to have to teleport through a gate because I have to go hunt in a faraway place for the quest.”

“Congratulations, by the way, am I able to come as well?”

“Well, I have to go alone...”

“That’s too bad. I wanted to go along with you...”

“It’s Difficulty Rank is B...”

“...Good luck and goodbye.”

Mapan specialized in trading skills.

Weed did not have the required skill to be a merchant.

However, bringing Mapan along would have been a bad choice.

He was too weak to keep up with him, so Weed headed to the Church of Freya for the rest of the day.

Inside the church were the High Priest and the group of Paladins.

“Hello. It is good that you have come.”

Weed trembled when the High Priest finished his sentence.

What were the odds alone? I thought an Ossan High Priest was supposed to be a benevolent person.

(P/R: ‘Ossan’ is Japanese for middle aged man usually 40+)

It was a terrifying and desperate situation, without the slightest opportunity to escape from.

However, Weed wasn't going to give up the quest unless it was the worst case possibility with no return profit.

However, the day before, the high priest had said, "This is a very important quest. I cannot predict the future of humanity. However, I do know that this matter is urgent. This could change for the worse in a matter of days."

Weed wanted to nod.

Personal circumstances!

This couldn't be any worse!

Depending on the circumstances that arise, he could very well never be allowed to come back to the church.

However, the High Priest placed him in an even worse situation.

"I founded this Church of Freya in this town. I trust that you are the Hero of the legends and that you will find the relic as quickly as possible."

"What do you mean?"

"This time tomorrow, when you arrive, a priest of this church will be at your command. If you return with him safely then you will be rewarded based on how much stronger he has become. Do

not be anxious about tomorrow and we will see you soon.”

“ ... ”

Everything was set up so that he could not escape.

The Free City of Somren, with the freedom lost! It was now like a prison without bars.

The Crown of Fargo had been stolen from the Church of Freya and Weed was not allowed to get help from other players. Weed was only allowed to use the people that the High Priest had provided.

“I will now introduce you to the person that will help you rescue the Paladins if any can be saved...”

The High Priest opened a door with a small key. Inside was a small boy that was wearing a white hat and white priest robes.

“This is our church’s candidate for the next Pope, Alveron. Thank you for your help.”

“It’s a pleasure, Weed.” said Alveron formally.

Alveron wasn’t a user, but an NPC.

Weed and Alveron headed deep into the church. In the center of the capital of the Kingdom, there existed a complex rune that had been engraved into the ground and served as a teleport-gate.

Kkolkkak!

Gulp Weed swallowed hard.

Using the teleport gate would instantly send him to Morata. But he had not forgotten that the province of Morata was inhabited by the infamous True Blood Vampire Clan that were frighteningly powerful.

Not the entire Versailles continent was full of users. Adventurers had discovered the Northern Continent but people did not approach it because the monsters were too strong in that part of the world.

He stood there and they began the preparations to start the teleportation.

“We absolutely must rescue our paladins brothers!”

The High Priest and the priests had gathered large amounts of mana to operate the teleport gate.

Light came out of the gate, surrounding Alveron and Weed, and soon both of them disappeared from the Church of Freya.

150 years ago the Niflheim Empire, which is located in the northern continent, was destroyed by monsters. While the nobles were busy fleeing, the Templar army that was stationed there was wiped out. Afterwards the Niflheim Empire became territory infested by monsters.

Now a single law governed here.

The survival of the fittest, and the strong takes all.

“So this is Morata...”

Weed and Alveron had appeared at the entrance of a cave.

The Church of Freya’s teleport gate and the cave were connected.

“Ohh, its cold!” As soon as Weed arrived and went out of the cave, he felt a severe chill.

The terrain and climate on the Versailles Continent differed enormously depending on the location.

Unfortunately, Morata is located in the far northern continent, which belonged to the cold regions.

In this zone, all seasons long, it was an perpetual ice zone.

“Never thought it would be so cold...!!”

Weed’s body began to shiver more and more from the cold.

His body began to shrink back from the random wind that was blowing into his collar.

Ting

Warning: You have caught a cold!

In order to overcome the cold, it is recommended to wear thick clothing or start sitting near a fire.

If the severe cold were to continue for a long period of time, then it may worsen your condition.

The body has become more rigid and the physical ability has reduced by 5%.

The speed at which satiety is reduced has increased by 25%.

Shivering shivering

The message had said that the cold could get worse.

But he could not stay around in the cave, as he had to look around and scout the area.

He looked around the snow-capped ridges.

Past the devastated city. The deserted, lost city.

Across the center of the second of third rows of houses was the mansion of the nobility.

Over the rooftops with snow heavily piled on top, the collapsed ceiling of the buildings could be seen.

Though the interior was seemingly empty, there was random furniture inside. It seemed that the houses had been uninhabited for a long period of time without anyone to maintain the buildings.

“So this must be village of Morata...”

Weed gazed across the town towards the gigantic black structure.

It had a large fence and didn't have any lights on; the windows were also closed and crows flew over the roof.

The castle of Morata.

The black brick castle was covered in white snow. A strange combination that sparked a slight bit of inspiration inside of Weed. Jet black crows were circling around the top of the castle.

Usually, birds would easily freeze and die, but these crows were a tougher breed of bird. As these crows had been turned into vampires, and because the crows had been turned into vampires, they could not die and were still able to move their limbs.

“It seems that this is where the True Blood Vampires are. This really won’t be easy.”

Weed finished scouting and returned to the cave.

Ting

Temperature has risen slightly

The cave with the teleport gate was a little bit warmer. It was fortunate that the cold winds did not blow into the cave.

“So this is the Province of Morata.”

At an earlier time, the Uncle of Queen Natalya, Archduke Morata had ruled the province.

It had once been known for the outstanding quality of its leather and cloth and was quite prosperous, but now it had succumbed into a desolated village.

Humans were nowhere in sight, it was a ghost town!

In the capital city of the Niflheim Empire, Mordred, all the inhabitants had been killed.

Weed mentally tallied up his quest objectives

'First, rescue the paladins. Second, get rid of the True Blood Vampire Clan from the city, and thirdly, find the Crown of Fargo'.

That was all he had to do. It was a simple, easy plan.

But Weed was frustrated at the reality of it. He was the Legendary Moonlight Sculptor.

To expected to do such a high level quest, he would need to have an amazing class to make up for the 68 levels he was short. He regretted that he had not gained more experience before returning

to the ground from the flying city of Lavias.

“Now what am I going to do?”

Weed went back into the cave to ask Alveron some questions. Fortunately, the NPC Alveron had absolute trust in Weed and listened to him.

“So, before I start, I want you relax and sit down. I don’t believe that I have properly introduced myself. My name is Weed. I am older than you so address me respectfully. Okay?”

“Yes Weed-nim.”

Weed spoke a little bit more politely as he asked carefully.

Alveron looked like a very young and fairy-like boy, so he didn’t want it to get awkward if he was overly polite.

‘A kid...’

Weed wanted to ease the difficulty of hunting the monsters.

“This is very difficult, so I will need to know what level you are...”

“It’s 320.”

“ ... ”

The candidate for the next Pope was at an enormous level. Weed hadn't known that an NPC level could be so high. Even so, priests did not have much combat ability, an area in which he excelled in.

The question this time was not about levels but about fame. From completing the quest, Weed's fame had risen to over two thousand.

“Your level is fairly high. But I want to know how truly you have lived your life. How high is your fame?”

“Let's see, it's about 150,002...”

“ ... ”

Weed tried not to sound condescending when he spoke to NPCs.

However, because Alveron looked like a little boy, he had forgotten that he was a master level candidate for the position of next high priest.

“What's the matter?”

“Nothing, rest for now.”

Like a good child, Alveron went and sat in the corner. Sitting in his white robe, his posture seemed to indicate that he was engrossed in a pious prayer.

“Now that the small tasks have been taken care of, it’s time to start.”

Weed laid a blanket on the floor.

Blankets were, in fact, essential items for travelling because they could prevent the chilling effects.

‘I did not realize that I needed to prepare clothes...’ He thought between shivering.

Rosenheim Kingdom and the Free City of Somren all belonged to the warmer provinces so there had been no need to carry any additional clothing. He had never thought that such a difficult problem would arise from not carrying around basic travel clothing.

Weed’s body trembled as he flipped open his backpack and called out commands to retrieve items from his inventory.

He retrieved the weapons and armors worth 1 gold he had stocked up on in Liberty City.

Kwajijik!

Weed struck the breastplate with his fist firmly. He struck it several times here and there until it broke in several places. The items were cheap, with weak armor and durability, so it broke quickly.

“Now I do this...” he mumbled to himself.

Weed pulled out a hammer he had bought from the blacksmith shop to repair the breastplates durability. With it, the power of blacksmithing and related skills was increased by 10%!

He had purchased it in the Free City of Somren.

“Repair.” He said as he hit on the breastplate with the hammer

Fixing a breastplates durability was hard. He hammered the steel plate a few times until the damaged area was fixed.

Weed then continued to break and repair the armor.

After about 10 minutes, a message window popped up.

Ting

Repair skill proficiency has increased.

However, due to the repetitive damage to the armor, the durability of the breastplate continued to drop permanently until...

Ting

Warning: Item loss!

An item has been lost due to frequent destruction.

The breastplate that Weed was holding in his hands had been destroyed and had finally been torn to shreds.

Repairing broken equipment could contribute to skill in some cases, but if it was frequently broken artificially, then you would have no use for a breastplate made of inferior steel.

Weed continued to break all the breastplates he had brought,

then moved onto the shin guards and once those were broken, he took out the helmets.

8 hours later!

Weed was able to earn 10% repair skill proficiency.

At the cost of 100 gold, the items of broken debris were piled up to the ceiling.

“Skill Check: Repair”

Repair (Beginner Lv: 9 | 89%):

Only 11% more until the repair skill reached the intermediate level. Then the durability of equipment could be repaired to maximum.

“Ah-choo!”

He had been repairing items without taking a break. Weed sneezed. He had a runny nose and soon thereafter he also had a sore throat.

Ting

Warning: Your Cold has worsened!

In order to overcome the cold, it is recommended to wear thick clothing or start sitting near a fire.

If the severe cold were to continue for a long period of time, then it may worsen your condition.

The cold can lead to other complications!

-20% reduction of the body's abilities.

-30% reduction of skill effects.

Reduced maximum health and mana.

“...” Weed was at a loss for words.

He had only had a little cold but now it had gotten worse. This

was probably because he had been sitting in one place for far too long without moving.

“Damn it!”

There were three tragic things to look out for when one was alone.

Hunger, the cold and sickness!

Struggling with hunger was harder in cold climates since barley bread was no warm food.

The cold had affected his skills since it made his body more frigid. Weed was depressed that he had caught the cold.

‘It’s unbelievable...’ Weed sighed.

Life had been so difficult ever since he started this game. He had gotten a class that he hadn’t wanted; he had also gotten into all sorts of trouble like the present cold.

Weed took comfort in the fact he wasn’t alone though.

‘Alveron’s probably the same.’

Alveron was sitting over in the corner of the cave, dressed in his

white robe.

‘He’s probably feeling colder than I am because he’s only wearing his robe...’

Weed felt a little bit of satisfaction, being better off than someone else put him in a good mood.

It was probably best that he didn’t know that Alveron’s robe had a special option spelled into it, preventing the cold to penetrate.

*

Lee Hyun exited his capsule so he could start cleaning the house.

He swept the corners, wiped the window, scrubbed the bathroom sink and changed the lights. As today was cleanup day.

“Got to make sure that grandma’s house isn’t too messy.”

Lee Hyun mumbled as he continued to mop the floor.

His grandmother had told him while she was still in the hospital that It looked like she had a disease.

Degenerative arthritis.

Working too much when young could put a lot of strain on the joints. The hospital's doctors told her not to worry.

"Modern medicine can fix this degree of joint damage without any trouble. Don't worry about it.

Lee Hyun was willing to pay for the medical bills. Expensive drugs were required for joint regeneration."

Grandmother's illness, however, was beyond what was diagnosed. Because she had not received regular health checkups, another disease in her body had grown significantly. The test result stated that cancer cells had spread throughout her body.

In modern times, there were no longer anyone dying from cancer. It does, however, require surgery and several months of hospitalization.

'I need to keep saving up money; I can't stop earning...'

Aside from the money from the high school festival, Royal Road brought in a considerable amount of money.

The entire process was faster than originally planned.

Thanks to hunting in Lavias and the Royal Road item trading site.

When Lee Hyun finished cleaning the house, his sister came home from school.

“The house is so clean today. Were you cleaning?”

“Come on, let’s not waste time. Grandma is waiting for us to visit.”

Lee Hyun took his sister to the hospital to see their grandmother.

“Hello.”

“Grandma, were you lonely?”

Lee Hyun spent most of his time in the game capsule and his sister was at school most of the week. It was difficult to hire a caretaker for his grandmother since he didn’t have that kind of money.

He cleaned up the room and threw away the trash. After he finished, he sat next to the hospital bed and took his grandmother’s hand.

“I’m sorry, dear. You’re always coming to see me.”

“ ... ”

“I hope it’s not too much, but can I ask you a favor, dear?”

“Yes, go ahead and ask anything.”

“They say it’s never too late to learn. I would have loved it if you had been able to finish high school normally...will you get your GED?”

He could understand what she meant.

When Lee Hyun quit high school, his sister had cried. When he had insisted that he needed to drop out of school she hadn’t said anything else.

Being harassed and humiliated by loan sharks at school, such an education was far from normal.

It was a disappointment that he had failed to get his education.

Lee Hyun replied. “Yes Grandma, I will get my GED.”

Lee Hyun headed home alone while his sister stayed behind at the hospital. The next day was a holiday so she could stay longer.

Lee Hyun would have preferred to stay and enjoy the moment. But he had work to do.

‘GED...what do I need to study?’

When he had gone to school, his grades had not been that bad.

‘Reference books and textbooks from the bookstore...no, it’s better to buy them used from the bookstore.’

He went to the used bookstore that he remembered in the city. It was right next to the swordsmanship dojang he had attended in the past.

The swordsmanship dojang was still there.

“Yiyahap!”

“Tahat!”

Excited shouts could be heard.

Lee Hyun was intrigued and headed to the dojang.

*

“There doesn’t seem to be that much talent.”

Ahn Hyundo complained about the performance of his students.

“Even since I put down my sword and started teaching...”

Ahn Hyundo had locked his heart in depression. No matter what he did, they did not understand the way of the sword.

‘The sword... The sword will soon disappear and there will be no one for me to talk swords with.’

Ahn Hyundo’s heart ached as he looked over to the swords on the wall, when he had opened the dojang with a passion. It had been 10 years since he had started the dojang where he only taught adults instead of children.

“Master!”

“What is it? What’s so important that you’re making so much noise about?”

“He’s here!”

“Is it those guys...?”

Because everyone was talking at once, he was unable to understand anything since it was incomprehensible.

Then, at that moment, Ahn Hyundo thought about a familiar face.

‘That young man, Lee Hyun! The one I was going to make my successor!’

Lee Hyun would have been chosen.

He had never disappointed him since the moment he showed up at the dojang.

Ahn Hyundo stood by as he listened to what was happening.

“So he’s here at the dojang?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Come on, let’s go.”

Ahn Hyundo had wanted to see him again. He wanted to see what the person he chose as his successor was capable of!

“But, there is a problem.”

“What is it?”

“He is asking to spar with people.”

“So what’s the problem if he wants to spar? I don’t know what could be the problem since they should be strong enough.”

“Yes, I judged it the same way, so I had Dog Sun spar with him but it was a one-sided victory by Lee Hyun.”

“Ah ha!”

Endless training.

The practitioners at the dojang all have been coming for more than three years. Even in such a limited amount of time they had achieved some grade of proficiency.

So the students were tough opponents.

In sparring, beginners tried to avoid major injuries, but experts controlled the flow of the fight.

“I cannot believe that Dog Sun was defeated...”

“Yes, it took less than 2 minutes.”

“I’m sorry for Dog Sun but, for something as little as this, what does it matter?”

Ahn Hyundo asked Chung Il Hoon about what was wrong.

“Well after Dog Sun was defeated, Lee Hyun asked the others to spar as well.”

“Those guys have been learning the sword much longer than Dog Sun right? So who did he fight with next...?”

“Chang Guk.”

“He’s been learning the sword for over six years now. He was careless to fight after he was tired from fighting Dog Sun.”

“I tried to get him to reconsider but...”

“So he’s badly hurt?”

“No. This time too he won.”

“Oh!”

Ahn Hyundo had not been wrong when he had seen him.

‘He can’t hide his fighting spirit. His will to become stronger... the desire for strength!’

That quality let him win the fight against Chang Guk.

“But the real problem is that Chang Guk was just one of those that he sparred with.”

“Who else?”

“Yes, well, six practitioners.”

“You mean he continuously fought six men?”

“They were all unable to do anything to him.”

“Come on, let’s go take a look.”

The dojang instructors and practitioners gathered to watch the sparring.

“Such incredible stamina...!”

“That’s the ninth one that has lost!”

“He’s using the right amount of force...no matter how much stamina one possesses, it’s not easy to fight nine people consecutively.”

“Never mind fighting one after another. Just fighting against another practitioner is difficult enough.”

“But how can he win like that?”

“Strength and technique, it seems that he has found a compromise in the between the two of them. He reduces the amount of unnecessary movements of his lower body. Even so, he would have to train his lower body for a long time to achieve such skill.”

“But how he is able to fight like that?”

The practitioners had overseen Lee Hyun’s training when he attended the dojang as Chung Il Hoon and Ahn Hyundo had. Ahn Hyundo took a look and nodded.

“I know why he seems to be fighting.”

“Why is that Master?”

“When you’re bored, you want to fight whoever you can.”

The practitioners looked over at Ahn Hyundo.

“Then it’s just to relieve stress, Master?”

“When you’re up against opponents, it feels good to hold and swing the sword, doesn’t it?”

“Well, I guess...”

“Sometimes I would want to let loose and fight without reason. But we do not want to know these strong primal instincts. Nowadays, swords hang on walls and because of that, the view about yourself changes inevitably. Now few have the instincts of a hunter, the fighting spirit of a wild beast.”

Kwajik!

Another practitioner was forced to kneel down in front of Lee Hyun. As Lee Hyun slowly walked towards him with his wooden sword the other practitioner yielded.

“Stop, stop! I lose.”

Lee Hyun stopped the sword in front of the trainee’s forehead.

“Who’s next?”

Lee Hyun’s potential was astounding. His uniform was soaking wet with his sweat, showing off his powerful chest.

A drop of sweat flowed down the wooden sword and fell onto the floor.

But he did not seem tired. In his eyes, his fighting spirit seemed to be burning.

Those were eyes intent on the hunt!

Just a lone wolf's silent roar threatened the position of the others.

More than 100 of the practitioners in the dojang were feeling the intimidation.

“Let me move away.”

“Call out the masters!”

The trainees could not take the heated challenge and Chung Il Hoon just shook his head.

“Seriously you guys...”

“Masters!”

“If the rumor spreads that 10 people lost, then the dojang's honor will decrease. I will fight him.”

Chung Il Hoon was going to fight directly. He won silver medals at the Worldwide Swords Fighting Tournament twice, he was considered an expert.

Practitioners had never seen him fight seriously and only seen him teach others how to fight.

‘The masters are going to fight’

‘Are they really going to fight?’

The practitioners looked at Lee Hyun anxiously. He should give up because there was no guessing what would happen to him if he decided to fight.

They were speechless.

Lee Hyun held the end of his sword towards Chung Il Hoon. Chung Il Hoon was also ready to fight.

After the two of them picked up their swords, Ahn Hyundo yelled.

“Stop!”

“But master, if this guy leaves, then the pride of the dojang will...”

“I know that he beat 9 or more guys, but he is from our dojang so it will not damage the pride of our swordsmanship.”

“I suppose...”

“In fact, to fight a weary opponent would be a disgrace to us instead.”

Ahn Hyundo tried to preserve the peace in the dojang. Fighting a student and fighting an instructor were two entirely different things. Chung Il Hoon decided to stand back and talk. But Ahn Hyundo smiled as he said.

“Don’t you think that it would be fairer if an old man like me fights a tired opponent?”

“Master!”

“Master you...!”

The entire dojang was brimming with excitement.

Even though Ahn Hyundo was old, no one thought he was weak.

Ahn Hyundo was the World Swords Fighting Champion for four consecutive years.

He was not someone anyone in the country could beat even if he only had a stick.

The entire dojang was quiet as Ahn Hyundo walked to the center of the dojang.

“We’re going to see the Master’s swordsmanship...”

‘Such a small opportunity comes around once in a lifetime?’

The practitioners in the dojang held their breaths for the confrontation between the two fighters. If Ahn Hyundo’s swordsmanship were to be seen it should be in a more glorious manner. However, each of the instructors was perplexed by his actions.

‘Even if Master was interested in the kid, to think that he would personally take a look at the matter himself?’

‘If this keeps up, then everyone will want to challenge him...’

The Master was the pride of the Republic of Korea when it came to swordsmanship but he did not speak his mind much.

Lee Hyun had defeated nine people, even though they were practitioners. There had been a big gap between the practitioners and the challenger. But the difference was huge between the practitioners and the disciples directly taught by Ahn Hyundo.

No matter how many practitioners Lee Hyun defeated, the instructors were not agitated in the least. They admired his swordsmanship, his amazing stamina, and his fighting spirit.

‘But there is another problem.’ Chung Il Hoon thought.

Ahn Hyundo was fighting.

This was unusual.

‘Perhaps he won’t get serious?’

Chung Il Hoon shook his head back and forth. Ahn Hyundo came by at least once a week to compete with him in the way of the sword.

Endlessness.

Despair.

And awe.

Ahn Hyundo had reached the pinnacle. Only those below him could see that. Chung Il Hoon could not even dream of even reaching the level where he could touch his collar. There was no way Ahn Hyundo could lose.

‘There is no way that I can do anything. He will fight his favorite disciple moderately. Good luck, Lee Hyun.’

Chung Il Hoon's eyes were cold as ice as he exhaled.

Lee Hyun's stamina had already reached its limit. His willpower had lasted this long, but soon it would be shattered.

Chung Il Hoon saw that as the problem.

With his stamina gone as the practitioners had fought him wholeheartedly, no matter which practitioners he had fought, Lee Hyun's body had reached an extreme state because of fighting 9 men.

Chung Il Hoon thought that his overwhelming skills had come to an end.

'Master doesn't have to do much to subdue a guy that's already done for.'

However, Chung Il Hoon was completely mistaken.

It was a heartwarming scene as their eyes met as Ahn Hyundo said to Lee Hyun.

"Do you like using a wooden sword? I have a wooden sword in my hands as well, but wouldn't you want to fight with real swords?"

Chapter 7: Ignorant Beginners

“This is ridiculous!” Chung Il Hoon screamed.

He had never stopped Ahn Hyundo’s decisions before but this time he couldn’t stand by.

“The opponent is a beginner. Beginner swordsmen do not know how to properly use a sword in a fight!”

“Argh, Hoon! I did not ask you. I was talking to my opponent! You’re going to interfere with my duel!” Ahn Hyundo’s voice rang throughout the dojang.

Honestly, nobody could stop Ahn Hyundo. If they tried, then they would be subject to a severe repercussion.

They could not afford to take that risk.

The instructors were silent, glancing to Lee Hyun to reject the proposal.

‘It is better if you flee now than to get beaten.’

Competing with real swords...

When fighting with real swords, literally anyone, no matter how

skilled, would be scared witless.

However, Lee Hyun stood his ground.

Ahn Hyundo applauded him.

“That’s good. You didn’t back off. Just like a real man. Sun Hoon, go up to my room and bring the two swords on the wall. Do you know where they are?”

“Boss...”

The matter had gotten worse. Those steel swords were great at cutting.

Chung Il Hoon sensed that the outcome of the fight would be relentlessly horrible.

*

‘A sword’...

Lee Hyun stood holding a real sword. He felt as though his mind was clear and he had just woken up.

‘Huh, why am I here?’

Lee Hyun had come from the hospital to go to the bookstore.

Then he saw the dojang. He was not there to fight, he just wanted to clear his mind of a little frustration.

Training and working up a good sweat was refreshing.

Challenging the dojang.

To compete with the sword.

Lee Hyun did not object.

Wooden sword vs. wooden sword.

It was a fair match.

There was no reason to refuse.

The first opponent was a little weak, as he felt that the opponent's technique was a bit lacking. Strength training was not necessarily the path to become stronger.

One should use the potential power of the muscles properly. It emerges when one utilizes breathing and core body flexibility.

The first opponent was lacking in that area.

Another challenger had appeared after the first opponent had lost. Against a sword expert with a lot of experience, Lee Hyun looked for weak spots.

Defense-orientated swordsmanship.

However, it was not perfect. In that very moment, he was able to find the flaw.

Considering the speed of the movement of the opponent's sword, Lee Hyun used that difference to attack the weak point.

‘It's thanks to Royal Road. I've been in fights over tens of thousands of times.’

Virtual reality games.

In Royal Road, if everyone became a sword master, then the world would be full of strong people.

Most users typically relied on skills and the game mechanics instead of their own bodies to fight. Someone like Lee Hyun who had earnestly learned the sword to play the game was a rare find.

So he knocked down the second practitioner.

But then another challenger appeared.

‘Why don’t you want me to win? Why do they want to beat me?’

He was angry. He didn’t know that his eyes were like those of a hungry wolf, provoking the others.

Tough like a beast!

Using all his strength until they were cornered.

He grasped the sword.

‘Cool...’

Lee Hyun shook his head as he took the sword.

As he took the sword, he could not remain still. At that moment, it felt as if every cell in his body was latching onto it.

Until now, he had felt as if he had been seeing everything at about 20%, about 5 times less than he was now.

Early in the morning, his body was normally extremely sensitive to everything around, he was stressed and in an agitated mood.

Lee Hyun calmly collected his breath.

He felt as if by simply holding the sword his mind had been cleaned.

Ahn Hyundo did not attack immediately.

Thanks to that, he was able to rest for a brief moment.

A very short moment.

He rested his muscles and blood vessels. The heart spread oxygen throughout his entire body.

In his hand, the sword felt very cold, but heat in his chest kept rising.

‘So this is how it feels to hold a real sword.’

He did not seem to know why he was here and in this situation. He had just come to have a sweat and could not believe what had happened.

‘Surrender’

It was not worth it. There was no need to fight without having something to fight for and he could easily get injured holding the sword.

He apologized and admitted defeat, laying down the sword.

Then Ahn Hyundo examined Lee Hyun's eyes and said.

“Are you scared? Don't have the courage to fight? That's okay. The law of nature states that in the wilderness, wild beast turn tail and run when they meet someone stronger than them.”

Lee Hyun was enraged.

He wanted to fight.

In a moment, he picked up the sharp sword and held it close to his chest.

He had unwittingly decided to pick up the sword despite having fought over nine times.

Chaeaeaeng

The sword let out a metallic sound.

The metal sword let out incredibly clear sounds.

Ahn Hyundo also took his sword lightly as he stepped back a step.

“It is better to put down a sword that you cannot swing. You have

swung it once already but you swung it too hard. Care to try a second swing?”

Instead of answering, Lee Hyun swung the sword. It was about 60 percent the speed of the original swing but it was a good attack.

Jjanggal

Gripping the iron, he could feel the subtle vibrations flowing to his fingertips.

Lee Hyun could hear the good, clear sound of the sword in his hand.

‘This is a good sword.’

From listening to the sword, he felt as if it was part of his body. To some extent, he could tell how sharp the sword was and the small difference that made it a good sword.

Ahn Hyundo blocked Lee Hyun’s attack very gently, and then raised the speed of his sword to attack.

However, because of the concern over bodily harm, it was possible for Lee Hyun to prevent the attack.

If there were swords flying towards the body from the front, then there was plenty of room to let them graze past.

Ahn Hyundo struck away Lee Hyun's sword like a tyrant.

His sword swung away from him. He pounced towards Lee Hyun as if he was a wild beast to kill.

Ahn Hyundo's sword came stabbing towards Lee Hyun's heart.

The sword!

'I do not want to die!'

Lee Hyun struck Ahn Hyundo's sword to interfere with its path.

His consideration toward his opponent's well being had disappeared.

He struggled to avoid being hit with his colossal will to live.

A clear sound of the wind.

A flash of light would appear over their chests as the iron swords clashed.

The practitioners had their mouths hanging from their fierce attacks.

“In..instructors! This needs to be stopped, doesn’t it?”

The practitioners asked anxiously.

Chung Il Hoon could not believe the current situation that was watching.

It was very difficult to subdue Lee Hyun without injuring him.

However, for Ahn Hyundo’s level of proficiency, it was possible.

For him, it was a simple task of hitting the wrist, the sword hilt, or by temporarily immobilizing him by hitting a vital point on the forehead.

It was simple for Ahn Hyundo to put Lee Hyun in that state, but he did not have the slightest intention of doing so.

With goose bumps all over his skin, he was barely managing to survive.

‘Instructors, think of something! Surely you have an idea of what to do...?’

‘I don’t think so. But why am I so anxious?’

Chung Il Hoon had not known what would have happened once

the swords were brought into the situation. Once they were brought out, it was dangerous to try and stop the situation.

But soon he was able to relax and watch. The swords continued their exchanges.

Lee Hyun's strength was being dragged out by pushing his will to live in front of a strong opponent.

More vigorously, stronger, faster.

These thoughts gradually awakened.

Lee Hyun had complete control over his own body. This caused his body to rebel.

Chung Il Hoon watched as Lee Hyun changed by beginning to penetrate deeper into the way of the sword.

The skilled practitioners could see it with their eyes but soon even the others began to feel something.

“Huh?”

“It's a little different.”

“What has changed?”

Ahn Hyundo cut a path to prevent the attacks.

Diagonal slicing sword.

Lee Hyun lowered his body at the same time to avoid being stabbed by the sword, moving on instinct rather than thought. Lee Hyun struggled against Ahn Hyundo's outrageous sword fighting skills without hesitation.

'Why are you having fun? This is a dangerous moment...!' Lee Hyun thought as the corners of his mouth curled into a smile.

Not knowing why himself, he decided to focus on the duel.

Sword fighting. Challenging others to a fight. The fight itself was good.

'I've been thinking too much. When I'm faced with a fight, I do not need to think...'

Swinging the sword felt good; when Lee Hyun moved towards Ahn Hyundo he swung his sword. His body began to show an unsteady reaction.

Lee Hyun let go of his sword completely exhausted, he had terrible muscle pain and his legs gave out and he could not stand.

“Drink this. It will calm your body down a little.”

Ahn Hyundo gave him a cup of tea that had a deep and profound smell.

“This is good.”

“Yes. This is wild ginseng tea from Baekdu Mountain.”

“The price would be expensive...”

“There is nothing more precious than the body, don’t you agree?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

Lee Hyun unreservedly drank the tea. He mixed a bottle every day.

It was good for the body.

“That’s some good drinking. Have some more.”

“Thank you. I’m thirsty and tired.”

Lee Hyun drank five cups of the tea.

Ahn Hyundo took the time to start a conversation.

“Ahem, I’m curious. This is the first time you have held a sword, correct?”

“Yes.”

“You did not panic very much. However, for the dignity of the nine men you beat, did you learn the sword anywhere else?”

“That’s not it. I learned the sword...”

He brought up the story of Royal Road.

How he mastered the sword while hunting monsters and how he had hit the scarecrow.

Lee Hyun did not trust others easily. He did not open up to others because of the memories of how he had lived up till now. However, he seemed to somehow trust Ahn Hyundo.

During dark times, people tried to hide their problems. Ahn Hyundo helped people in need and people came to trust and rely on him. A man who believed that training was more valuable than a thousand words.

“I see. You must have had a difficult struggle to develop your

swordsmanship.”

“However, thanks to it, I have managed to learn the basics up to this extent.”

“So you’re telling me that there are really monsters? Living, moving monsters that you can catch for items and money...and you gain experience? Are there dragons?”

“Yes, yes there are...”

“For now, you’re tired, so go rest. I hope that you can come by the dojang sometime later so we can spar again sometime.”

“Goodbye.”

Lee Hyun finished his break and then left the dojang. Then Chung Il Hoon was surprised.

“Master you don’t want to get him? So you have changed your mind of having him be your successor then?”

“No, he’s busy with his game.”

“So you’ll just let him leave?”

“Leave him be for now. In time his skills will mature. I will watch

him for the time being and guide him. However, this thing called Royal Road...”

When Ahn Hyundo was young, the idea about a fantasy world had been rampant. The idea of modern people traveling to another dimension to establish a fantasy kingdom!

Or meet the talented hero of legend. His story as he travels the world with only his chivalry and practice his swordsmanship.

“There are monsters...and Wyverns and Dragons! So there are even Dragons too?”

“Yes? At least that’s what I’ve heard. Nobody has managed to catch one yet though.”

Chung Il Hoon replied a little nervously. He seemed to have guessed what Ahn Hyundo was planning to do.

“Go into a fantasy world, become a hero of men, defeat Orcs, slay the dragons. Emperor? Becoming the Emperor? ...hmmm!”

Ahn Hyundo’s chest rose arduously.

It was the best place to learn the sword. The real question was how useful the sword actually was. Having learned the sword did not meet the desire for fame and riches.

“To fight monsters...Monsters threaten the humans so...Hoon!”

“Yes, Master?”

“It requires a capsule right?”

“Yes it does.”

“Order it!”

“Yes sir!”

Chung Il Hoon quickly took out his phone and ordered to have the capsule installed, which usually took two to three days most of the time. He made them install it the same day.

The capsule was installed just as he had demanded.

However there were 5 capsules instead of one.

“What is this?”

Under Ahn Hyundo’s sharp gaze, Chung Il Hoon confessed.

“It is the duty of the disciples to follow the Master, is it not?”

“So you mean that you and the other guys are going to follow me into Royal Road?”

“Yes.”

The instructors replied courageously.

“What about the dojang?”

“It’s not like we’re going off to a foreign country, and aren’t there the secondary instructors?”

Ahn Hyundo chuckled.

“So it’s such a nice game that you want to play as well huh?”

“Master! Please give us permission!” They said as they bowed.

“Then my name will be Geomchi, so Il Hoon you’ll make yours Geomchi².”

“Yes sir...”

“And you will be Geomchi³. Next, you can be Geomchi⁴ then.”

“Yes.”

In the Republic of Korea, the username of the disciples of the sword style was in numerical order.

“Keukkeuk.”

“So I’m called Geomchi4...”

The other instructors tried to conceal their bursts of laughter, but they also couldn’t avert their fate either.

“Then the next name will be Geomchi5.”

They all leaned forward in a bow and gave thanks to their Master.

However, cold sweat had broken out on their backs.

‘What a childish name...’

‘I would be so embarrassed to tell anyone my name wherever I go!’

Ahn Hyundo entered his capsule and made his account and character. Then he told his disciples his name and that he was starting in the Citadel of Serabourg of the Rosenheim Kingdom.

“Oh, this is surprising.”

Geomchi accessed the world and stood in a single spot for a while.

“I’ve never had this feeling before.”

He could feel everything. He could see and hear the people chatting and laughing in the completely medieval city.

All sorts of talk could be heard.

“Need to find four more people of the same level.”

“Selling steel axes for cheap!”

“Leaving to the southern villages to trade, looking for other merchants to come along.”

Sniff.

Geomchi’s stomach growled as the smell of delicious food reached his nose.

He turned his head and saw someone making food.

“Selling delicious food made with beginner cooking skill level 7,

delicious Mung Beans!”

Geomchi swallowed. He wanted to eat it but he didn’t have any money.

Then the others logged on.

Geomchi², Geomchi³, Geomchi⁴, Geomchi⁵!

“Master, so you logged in first.”

“So you’re here!”

“Yeah, you’re here as well!”

He had enjoyed teaching his disciples how to use the sword, but seeing them in Royal Road left a different impression.

Geomchi⁴ was startled when he looked inside his pockets.

“Oh, Master!”

“What is it?”

“I have 10 pieces of bread and a canteen in my pocket!”

“Yeah, that is incredible. Let us taste the taste of bread here, shall we?”

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, and Geomchi5 pulled out the bread from their pockets and took a bite.

The bread was very stale and hard to chew, like a stone.

“Twe, twe! It’s not very edible. They eat this when they go out to hunt?”

“I did a little research on the internet; there are large numbers of different types of food. Advanced level foods are so delicious that it almost melts in your mouth. It’s supposed to be heavenly.”

“As expected of one that I named Geomchi4! You’re a very bright kid.”

“Hehe, I get that a lot.”

Geomchi4 laughed, pleased because of his teacher’s praise. Back in the dojang, he was well liked by the other practitioners for being somewhat blunt and eager to help.

The mood of the Geomchi’s that logged into Royal Road was unusually pleasant and lighthearted, they often smiled.

“So to eat it, we just have to keep chewing it? Even though it’s

hard, it's like eating a biscuit.”

“It looks like it's made of barely. Barley bread?”

“Geomchi² and Geomchi³ ate their bread and took a drink of water from their canteen.”

“So, let's get started?”

“What do you mean? We have to go to the training center.”

“Lee Hyun, no, Weed said that you can't go outside for 4 weeks.”

“Well, let's go see whether or not the training center is any good!”

The five Geomchi's found the training center. There was an incredible amount of people wandering around in the Citadel of Serabourg so they had to ask around a few times to find the training center.

Inside the building a small number of people were using their skills on a scarecrow.

“Oh! So this is the way they do it.”

“What an outdated training method they have in this dojang. It

seems to be a systematic training in order to improve stamina.”

“Geomchi2, it’s not the facilities that matter is it? That is not important to a man that follows the way of the sword.”

Geomchi2 and the other Geomchi’s began to hit the scarecrows with the wooden swords. They had also listened to Weed’s story.

“So it’s a must to do this?”

“Yiyahap!”

Boom!

Geomchi2 and Geomchi4 felt a bit of nostalgia from swinging the sword like this again.

Constantly hitting a fixed object was like the training method practiced ten years ago, a training method that had long been discarded.

“Argh! Shout louder!”

“Yes! One million twenty one! One million twenty two!”

The Geomchi’s eagerly beat the scarecrows. Doing so left a good feeling inside them. Though the other users would think they were

crazy, they did not rest.

Learn the sword first.

Later on the sword could be used to slay exciting monsters.

Their strength and other abilities continued to grow.

‘I will kill the monsters of Royal Road with my sword.’ With that thought, their eyes grew brighter and brighter.

“By the way, I’m starting to get really hungry.”

“Master, we have two pieces of bread left!”

“So it seems. Can I eat it?”

“Sir!”

Geomchi ate the bread that was left. The last two pieces of bread were now depleted.

“I feel full thanks to the bread now!”

“Oh, yea! Geomchi4 you look quite proficient now.”

“Master, when we feel hungry the satiety falls!”

“Geomchi3, you’re right.”

“But what happens when the satiety keeps falling, now that we have no more bread?”

“ ... ”

Silence surrounded the group after what Geomchi3 had just said.

The atmosphere became tense after those words had been carelessly said.

The Geomchi’s began questioning.

“This is a serious situation. What do we do?”

“I think I know.”

“Geomchi2, tell me your idea.”

“What would you do? For example, when we hunt we can pick up items and make money. Then, if there is nothing more delicious, we can eat barley bread.”

“Oh, so we could do that...”

The rest of the Geomchis were smiling, but Geomchi4 shook his head.

“We can’t leave the city for four weeks so it looks like we’re going to starve.”

“ ... ”

All of the Geomchi’s lowered their heads. They did not have an answer to this frightful situation. Usually others with more gaming experience would go do a quest. However, they did not even imagine that they could go do a quest for NPCs. Their only solution was hunting, but they could not exit the city.

Then Geomchi held out his wooden sword and exclaimed.

“We will continue swinging our swords. Only concentrate on swinging the sword!”

“Yes Master! We will focus on the sword!”

“Oh, Master how admirable!”

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, Geomchi5 applauded.

(P/R: Idiots)

Then the five of them continued to beat on the scarecrow. Even though they were hungry, it gave them more willpower.

“Hohoho....”

The Training Center Instructor smiled heartwarmingly.

The Training Center Instructor was glad to see such enthusiasm from the practitioners.

“Hey, would you like to join me for a meal?”

The instructor invited them to have lunch. However, Geomchi swallowed his saliva and refused the invitation.

“No! Don’t we have our pride and self-respect that we do not need the charity of an NPC? Isn’t that right men?”

“That is correct! We live only for the sword.”

Khoreureuk

(P/R: The sound of their tummy rumbles)

“Now that I look at these scarecrows, they look pretty tasty.”

They started to sound ridiculous. Their satiety level was forced to drop since they had no more barley bread.

Less than 3% satiety! Moving to hit the scarecrow became arduous as they no longer had any stamina.

Ting

Warning: You have died of hunger!

You cannot sign in for 24 hours.

Since it was a simple state of death, no items or levels will decline.

Death, they died due to hunger...like dogs.

It was difficult to die in the starting state so it was extremely rare to die in the first four weeks.

To have the self-respecting Geomchi's die in such a way and in front of so many people, they died such a humiliating death.

Ahn Hyundo, with Chung Il Hoon's help, held a meeting in the dojang.

“Royal Road is an entirely new form of civilization, but we were too indifferent to its influence.”

“Yes, that's right.”

“If more practitioners spend more time training in a place where they can fight monsters, then their motivation will increase and inspire them further.”

“I think that's true. Fighting monsters and proving their skills will draw out their attention.”

Ahn Hyundo and Chung Il Hoon had also died the same death as the other instructors.

“Direct combat could be a good opportunity for them to realize the true power of the sword!”

“We will get the disciples to volunteer and they will easily get enlightened on the way of the sword. To travel an unknown continent with nothing but their sword, this is a good idea Master.”

However, the only female and secretary of the entire place, Ahn Hyundo's niece, put both hands on her waist and said to them.

“Effort is all that matters! You said that having an opponent was a tool that helps you grow. That’s what you always used to say!”

“Argh! What else is there then? What have we overlooked?”

“...!”

“So, our plan was to let all the formal practitioners join in so how many people is it?”

“500.”

“With an order of 500 capsules...they can discount it right?”

“They will be able to install it tomorrow, it should be fine.”

Chung Il Hoon replied confidently.

The capsules for the 500 disciples were received from the Immigration Control and Refugee Bureau. Ahn Hyundo’s dojang had a reputation all over the Republic of Korea. They received funding from the World Kendo Federation and the Athletic Association. They received a large amount of money from the disciples and among them were several that were in the Immigration Control and Refugee Bureau.

Geomchi₄ smiled and muttered quietly.

“That means that we are going to get 5000 more barley bread.”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“Keukeum!”

Chapter 8: True Blood Vampires

Weed logged back on and quietly sat down next to Alveron. Even NPC's had to act in a certain way to improve their level and skills.

‘It obviously was not a big deal’

In fact, teleport gate had many special options and, because the cave was the starting point, it was an area that was safe and completely protected from monsters.

Alveron woke up and followed Weed as he tried to sneak out of the cave.

“Where are you going?”

“Recon. Wait here for me.”

“Yes, I will wait for you here.”

Alveron sat back down in the cave.

Weed went out of the cave alone.

Knowing that Alveron was safe, Weed began walking out of the cave. Walking around in this place was like walking on very thin ice.

‘Monster...’

He was sufficiently far away from the cave.

The giant black castle and the village had disappeared from sight.

There was something he had overlooked during the day.

The snow-capped mountains and the villages were safe, there were no monsters.

‘There are very few groups of monsters. But monsters should appear near the river.’

Weed carefully went down the mountain. Far in the middle of a field was a pack of black wolves.

‘It’s not time to fight them yet.’

He got down on all four limbs and began to sneak around, sometimes hiding behind rocks for a while, and finally arrived at the village.

The village where there were once shops with heart-warming store owners were now rundown and abandoned. The whole village was abandoned and broken.

‘It appears impossible to resupply.’

That was the fundamental difference in coming to the Province of Morata. Food ingredients and herbs should have been bought as much as possible and left at the starting point. It was a big advantage having a surplus of supplies rather than not having enough.

But Weed could not afford the danger of searching through the town.

Ting

Warning: The cold has penetrated deeper into your skin!

Physical ability has decreased by 14%.

Wearing the armor had no additional effect. A fire could be used to defeat the cold, but with fire there was smoke. It was no different from suicide to start a fire here.

Weed decided to only take a little bit more time to carefully scout around because of the cold.

A couple of vampires passed by.

The True Blood Vampire Clan.

After a while, the group of vampires left and one wandered off alone.

A vampire had appeared.

Pale faces, and a black cloak hung to their bodies.

They wore jewelry and had rings on their hands.

“Blessing.”

Weed quietly used the Ring of the High Priest that he was wearing to bless himself, a light covered and emitted from his body.

Ting

The Blessing of the High Priest has been used. For 20 minutes, physical abilities are enhanced.

He checked his info window and the result was surprising. Strength, agility, stamina, endurance, and vitality stats were increased by an amazing 150%! Maximum health and mana were increased by 30% so he had a tremendous 7002 health and 6002 mana.

Weed invested most of the stats he got from upgrading into agility or strength. He barely increased in intelligence or stamina.

He was able to increase 'Fighting Spirit' stat through battle instead of stamina which acted as a complement.

'This is great.'

However, this fantastic item could only be used for 20 minutes.

"Bandages!"

The increase in maximum health and mana was nothing.

Accompanied by the bandage skill, the vitality stat could also be effectively increased.

His bandage skill had already advanced to the intermediate level.

The quality of the bandages along with the high level skill was able to recover health as a tremendous speed.

His mana regeneration rate was increased by 10% due the effect of the seven rings on his hand.

However, it was still a little lacking for him, and he was not quite ready.

‘Time to eat.’

Weed closed his eyes and ate the food.

Royal Bird of the Day Dish!

Food that was created from the eggs of the Avians birds.

An additional 500 health and mana increased.

But he still was not ready to battle. Weed held the sword and activated the innate skill.

“Sacred Blessing”

A buff that holy priests used. It was a skill one tier higher!

Weed’s body was covered in a gentle light.

Thanks to the superior grade of skill, his defense increased by 40%.

By this time, the vampire Weed was tracking was already hidden from view.

However hidden behind the wall of the house and coming towards Weed, was the vampire that had disappeared.

“So this was where the unpleasant feeling I felt was coming from...”

It seemed from the vampire’s words, that it was attracted to the sacred blessings.

“Sculpting Blade!”

Weed was surprised by the vampire suddenly approaching him.

He ran out of the house and rushed to use the skill.

“The enemy is a human!”

The vampire blocked Weed’s sword with his strong forearm. However, Sculpting Blade’s horrendous damage ripped through the enemy’s defense!

It did not matter what the enemy's level was. Whether it was rabbit or anything else, it made little difference to the Sculpting Blade. The damage was almost the same to monsters with powerful defense like vampires.

“Kyahaah!” The vampire's health declined as it was attacked.

However, as one would expect, it did not budge from such a high level attack. He withstood it as if it was a mosquito bite.

“I'll suck your blood human!”

The vampire extended his hands straight towards him. He had been caught by such a simple and ignorant attack and two holes were bored into the side of the neck.

It must have been an unpleasant experience.

Weed grabbed and held onto the vampire's chest as he dropped and rolled sideways. He stuck the snow covered ground with the vampire.

‘Alright. The damage was higher than I expected. But from now on, it'll be considerably less.’

Just like how the fight with the Death Knight was different from others. The purpose right now was to improve combat experience

that skills and stats could not.

Weed closed the stat window that displayed his health and mana. He examined his enemy with his eyes and felt the condition his body was in.

He focused on his enemy.

He was a lot simpler now than compared to back in the Continent of Magic. He did not know much about the game. He did not even have a map to memorize it. When he found a strong monster, he fought it simply to relieve stress.

It was of pleasure of finding a slightly stronger enemy.

He didn't need the advice of other people but rather directly experience and solve it himself.

Suffering a frustrating trial and error process.

Dying much more frequently than others.

Nevertheless, Weed was the best there could be! It was a constant challenge to be the person that constantly made their own path.

He walked the path the others usually did not take and hunted.

Enjoying the battle was far simpler than before. Instead of the battle being a click of the mouse and the keyboard, he enjoyed a real fight.

He could not deny the pressure from his class.

As more skill builds up, then there are a lot more things to lose. Whenever death came, there was always the fear of how many levels and how far skill proficiency would drop.

When you fight monsters, having thoughts like these increase the tension. They do not get much out of the battle itself.

Fighting strong enemies, clearing a quest, the fun of the game was a job he sincerely enjoyed doing.

“Kuwawaak!”

The vampire’s face suddenly distorted.

Since then, it began to attack stronger and faster.

“Septuple Strike!”

Weed demonstrated his skills at the right time.

He naturally thought of which skills to use at the right time.

“The odds are against you running away.”

Weed used Sculpting Blade around the vampire.

“Summon Bats!”

The vampire did not avoid the attack and opened his hands wide.

A group of black vampire bats were summoned.

“Kill him!”

The summoned vampire bats flapped their wings and flew into the air. They then landed on Weed and sucked his blood.

The noble monster, Vampire!

They were capable of using magic.

“Shield. Strength. Heal.”

The injured vampire strengthened its regenerative abilities to recover its health.

To attack the vampire after it recovered its health would be in

vain. The damage done to its forearm was healed.

“Damn it!”

Weed used his sword to attack the bats.

The blood sucking vampire bats stuck to him during the fight.

Swish!

The vampire rushed at Weed with overwhelming speed.

Since it was a skill that consumed a lot of mana, he could no longer continue using it to fight.

Without mana to empower his sword, he was unable to give the fatal blow to the vampire.

Luckily its healing magic did not recover everything.

The vampire no longer had enough mana to heal.

‘It worked! It’s out of mana now!’ The vampire finally began to bleed out.

Its pale face had become even white from extreme fatigue as it slowly moved forward.

However, a message popped up to Weed.

Ting

Warning: The effect of the Sacred Blessing has disappeared.

Strength was rapidly draining.

Ting

Warning: Your Cold has worsened!

In order to overcome the cold, it is recommended to wear thick clothing or start sitting near a fire.

If the severe cold were to continue for a long period of time, then it may worsen your condition.

The cold can lead to other complications!

-20% reduction of the body's abilities.

-30% reduction of skill effects.

Reduced maximum health and mana.

The sword grew heavy and his movements became sluggish.

His defense was reduced because of the vampire bats constantly draining his vitality. As the bleeding worsened, his health plummeted and his movement speed dropped.

“Human!”

The vampire finally caught Weed. The vampire's current health was less than 10%.

The vampire tried to suck his blood, but with a vigorous head butt Weed said, “This isn't over yet!”

The vampire could not stop laughing when he looked at Weed. The vampire was barely alive. Its mana was completely depleted.

But Weed was in a far more serious condition. He could not stop

his wounds from bleeding.

He closed his eyes.

Death!

He was logged out.

Lee Hyun stepped out of his capsule and clenched his fist.

He had experienced fighting a vampire. How were level 270 monsters? Strong. Very strong.

He was using the sword as well as the blessings and sacred blessings. The equipment was vastly different from the cheap weapons and equipment he got from the Death Knight.

That demonstrated the prominence of fully fledged high level monsters.

But he had an absolute feeling that it was not a monster that couldn't be beaten.

Lee Hyun took his fist and shouted, "The True Blood Vampires. I'll kill them all!"

Pale, Irene, Romuna, and Surka had to teach their parents about the game in the Citadel of Serabourg. Their parents left to complete a dungeon quest.

Then they decided to contact Weed.

“Hey Weed, you know the people you said that connected to the game recently. I should drop in and say hello.”

“Why not? I can’t really help them right now so it would be nice if you could give them a hand.”

“Certainly, since they are Weed’s friends and acquaintances.”

“Yes, it’s impressive that they’re already in their second week of swinging the wooden sword at the training center.”

Pale and Surka smiled fondly as they recalled a freakishly strong Weed fighting thousands of monsters.

Even though he was a sculptor, there wasn’t anyone whose swordsmanship was as strong. They were surprised and could hardly believe that he fought monsters using such ingenious sword fighting skills.

That was their expectations of Weed’s acquaintances.

“Not too long ago we were beginners, but now we have excellent understanding of the game.”

“That’s because Weed is the best.”

When they went to the training center, there was a large crowd.

“What is it? Is there something going on here?”

“Look over there. Now be surprised.”

Pale and Co. looked over to where they were pointing and they saw a large circle. Over 500 people were swinging a wooden sword towards a scarecrow.

“One, two, three!”

They were yelling and counting.

There 500 people were using wooden swords and simultaneously striking down scarecrows with precise timing. Each of their bodies moved at the same rate with the same movements.

But it was the look in their eye that surprised Pale the most.

‘What a heavy atmosphere.’

He could sense something in their eyes and It put considerable pressure onto his heart.

The terrifying atmosphere seemed about 1~2 times stronger since it was coming from 500 people simultaneously from all around the room.

‘I think I know why there are a lot of people gathered here.’

It was as if something like this had become natural around the training center.

“Huh, what is it?”

He was already close to tears from the unease. It looked like Weed’s acquaintances had a bunch of scary people mixed in.

“This is fine. The level is not high enough yet but we still can’t leave so we have to keep it up.”

Pale finally got enough courage and asked.

“Does anyone here know Weed?”

When he said that, 500 guys looked over at him.

Ba-bump!

Pale's chest began to beat faster in fear. But soon they went back to using their wooden swords to hit the scarecrow.

"I don't know what's going on here but I'll do what I can to help. We're here to help you so don't worry about it and come over."

Shying

All 500 of the wooden swords stopped just short of the scarecrow that they were beating. At nearly the same time, 500 people came running over to them. They fell down to their knees and cried to Pale.

"Ple-please barley bread..."

"Please feed us rice."

*

After one day in real life had passed, Weed reconnected in front of the teleport gate.

'Proficiency... it dropped a little bit.' Various skills had dropped by 5 to 7%.

Sculpting mastery had dropped by 7%. Cooking had dropped by 6%.

Other skills such as Handicraft, Sword Mastery, and Repair dropped by 5%.

Fortunately the only items that dropped when he died were only a couple of the one gold weapons.

‘I wasn’t ready for the True Blood Vampires.’

Weed started repairing broken equipment again.

“Repair!”

After he broke all the items in his inventory, he was able to reach the goal he had wanted.

Ting

Upgrade: Repair (Beginner Lv: 10 to Intermediate Lv: 1 | 0%):

The ability to repair has been improved based on the skill level.

It is now possible to restore to the maximum durability of equipment with a complete repair.

The 'Blacksmith' skill can now be learned.

“Finally...”

Weed repaired his equipment.

His current equipment had extremely low durability and he could not afford for new equipment.

The distorted cape became shiny; the dented body armor was evened out. The cracked and rusted parts were restored to a black iron.

“Alright. Time to start.”

When Weed tried to leave the cave, Alveron came up to him.

“I’ll help with fighting the vampires.”

“Not yet. There is still one more step of preparation.”

“Okay.”

Weed went to look around the Morata Province alone. Checking around certain areas he looked for where the monsters were

hiding.

There were a lot of results from his search.

There were quite a large number of monsters in the Morata Province.

On the other side of the village and the giant black castle were a large number of black wolves. They were around level 170 monsters but many of the wolves tended to wander alone instead of in groups. In the worst case, there were more than 100 wolves at once.

Though it was dangerous, Weed was able to recover the lost experience by sweeping up the wolves, using the sword's blessing and the high priest's blessings, he reached level 182.

“This was a decent hunting ground...”

Hunting was usually done in the surrounding area of a town or neighboring villages. The reason was because the monsters were evenly spread out and it was easy to save party members.

However, Weed wandered around hunting in places with a large number of monsters alone.

After he analyzed the surrounding area and monsters, Weed went to get Alveron.

“Give me healing.”

“Yes.”

Weed was bathed in divine power, healing his wounds.

There was no need for bandages.

As expected of Alveron, the next pope candidate with an enormous level of 320. However, NPCs like this were not allowed to die. Alveron dying meant that was the end. If the candidate for the next pope died in the middle of the quest, then he would fail the quest and the friendship with the Church of Freya would drop greatly. Think of it like something that can't be taken anywhere easily. But...

“Use protection magic.”

“Yes.”

“Weaken the power of the malicious forces that seek to injure him. Holy Blessing.”

“Increase my strength.”

“Please raise him power to fight against the evil and the wicked. Bless!”

Alveron was by far the best NPC that Weed had met so far. It wasn't just his higher level but he had a good personality too.

Why is it useful for a user to talk to an NPC to get a quest? This in itself was problematic because the sage would trick users!

But Alveron took care of his work and wasn't rebellious. It was the best thing around.

An innocent and naive NPC.

Weed dragged Alveron back and forth around Morata in order to hunt. That was the original purpose for bringing him.

Ting

You have leveled up!

A large number of monsters were killed.

With the help of Alveron, Weed was quickly able to reach level 200.

‘Finally!’

In Royal Road, level 200 was one of the checkpoints in the game. The server had been opened for about 1 year and 4 months now. The average level was around level 100. Trading and production classes were around the average level, but those under level 100 were usually considered noobs.

But in Royal Road, there were an overwhelming number of low level accounts. It was thanks to the new influx of people worldwide.

Each village was filled with noob adventurers who dream of trying to see the world.

Being over level 130 was acknowledged to some extent. At that point, many join a guild and start visiting other cities and villages.

Bards and other similar class begin wandering around level 50 but most classes stayed within hunting areas for their level.

A character over level 150 was quite famous.

And those over level 200 were even a rank higher.

This was because of second job advancement!

Classes such as knights and archers were able to change their class according to their preferences.

It was possible for certain kinds of wizards, clerics, warriors, thieves, and merchants to change class as well.

New skills became available!

The range of skills they can learn significantly widen and the other skills are automatically improved.

Because of this, level 200 was called the checkpoint.

In Royal Road, less than 20% of the total users were over the average level.

With Weed's deceptive strength and his production class, it made it difficult to determine a comparison to other characters.

Weed was doubtful of whether or not there was a second job advancement for him.

However, when Weed leveled up, his entire equipment set had changed. On his head was Van Hawk's Anti Magic Helm and he also wore on his hands the Rose Engraved Gloves. With the armor, Weed was dressed up as a Dark Death Knight now! However he wore white gloves with his black knight set.

It was not a good combination for an outfit, but stats were more important to him than what other people thought.

“Alveron, follow me slowly.”

“Yes.”

Weed and Alveron headed to the village in front of the giant black castle. Vampires were lurking around there.

It was not difficult to find them.

Within the village, over 300 vampires roamed around for blood and they could easily find them if they were not careful.

Weed waited for a single vampire to wander away from the group. Then at that moment he would appear and begin his attack.

“Sculpting Blade!”

Surprisingly, the vampire easily blocked the blurred sword of light with its forearm.

Then it revealed its fangs towards Weed and said.

“You again!?”

Incidentally it was the same vampire that Weed had been killed by last time.

It was the same guy in the same place and Weed had been waiting for an ambush.

“That’s great.”

Weed began to attack with his Sculpting Blade. He swung the dazzling sword around the vampire’s body.

“I guess that his spirit didn’t die and he came back. Kyaahat!”

The vampire began to attack while healing itself.

Weed continued the long battle. It was unavoidable that he had to deal enough damage to kill a few times over.

The vampire’s skill consumed a lot of mana, but it was over level 270!

The characteristics of the vampire tribe were dark magic, transformation, and the fascination with beautiful women, they were also the class with the best vitality. Other similar leveled monsters paled in comparison.

The special True Blood Vampires were much stronger than the common vampire.

Soon the sacred and holy blessings were disappearing and his mana was running out. He laughed knowing that the vampire was in a similar situation.

“Once again I will be killing you! Stupid human!”

Weed ran to the wall and shouted.

“Heal, protection magic, buff!”

“Okay, I will.”

Alveron came out from his hiding place. He restored Weed’s health and gave him various buffs.

Now the situation was reversed.

Weed smiled as the vampire’s face was puzzled in front of him.

He did not forget that the monster had killed him once before.

“I’ll get you next time! Fog of Mist!”

The vampire used his skill when he realized he was at a disadvantage.

Turning into fog in order to flee!

It was a vampire's unique skill to pass through walls or objects without being caught.

The vampire's body turned hazy with smoke. The smoke was dispersed everywhere rather than in one place!

The smoke began squirming to escape.

But Weed had not failed to finish him.

“Sculpting Blade!”

With the Sculpting Blade skill, it was possible to deal a direct blow to the monster's soul.

“Kueahaaah!”

The vampire that turned into mist was greeted with a Sculpting Blade.

With Alveron's help, Weed was able to have the pleasure of taking revenge.

Ever since that day, Weed began hunting in the mountain and regional plains during the night and returned to the village during

the day.

At night, thanks to the Moonlight Sculptor's passive skill, his stats increased by 30%. All combat based skills as well as sculpting skills and art stats were improved.

To others, hunting was hard work but what else could it mean!

Weed became stronger, but at night monsters also became stronger too. More often than not, it was more than 50% stronger. However, item drop rates and experience were also increased significantly.

Many monsters lurked in groups, such as wolves, but some monsters were often alone. So he was able to hunt even stronger monsters.

But now he could leisurely level up, thanks to Alveron, by killing vampires during the night despite the extra burden.

Weed was especially careful because safety was not guaranteed.

“Call Death Knight, Van Hawk!”

Death Knight Van Hawk.

He was summoned to join the fight.

Weed had killed the Death Knight hundreds of times without any difficulty and was now it was fully under his command.

This increased his familiarity with him.

A fair one-on-one victory.

He didn't like it.

Weed fought with vampires and evil wolves while Van Hawk raised his level by leaching of his experience.

While he was guarding Alveron, he said.

“Master, my level has risen...”

Occasionally Van Hawk would politely tell him the news.

Weed's subordinate Van Hawk was becoming stronger.

He was growing through hunting.

“Yeah.” replied Weed while looking over at Van Hawk with a disgruntled face.

Whenever the Death Knight killed, it gained its own experience. But whenever Weed hunted alone, 20% of the total experience

went towards Van Hawk. It was the summoning agreement and it would continue until the contract was terminated.

‘What a leecher...’ But he could not deny that he was a big help in battle.

Thanks to Van Hawk, hunting the vampires was much easier. Having another person made a big difference in actual battle.

Twice as much damage and armor.

Weed became safer since he didn’t need to take risks when he had a Death Knight as a tank. It took half as long to hunt vampires and he took only a fourth of the damage.

There were about 300 or so Vampire roaming around the village at any given time.

However, the True Blood Vampire Clan had over a thousand members. It seems the rest were inside the giant black castle.

Weed took care of vampires individually. Exactly numbering 49.

Then everything started to get into motion. A general level of a newly generated True Blood Vampire that died once already was 250.

Ting

Upgrade: Sword Mastery (Beginner Lv: 10 to Intermediate Lv: 1 | 0%):

Damage with the sword has increased 50%.

Intermediate Sword Mastery increased damage by 7% every time the skill levels up.

The sorrow of a sculptor!

Because they didn't have a weapon specialization, stat growth from reaching intermediate in Sword Mastery was lower.

However, as a sculptor, he had gotten his Sword Mastery to intermediate.

The result was literally achieved through many tears.

And then a few days later.

Another skill reached intermediate.

Ting

Upgrade: Sculpting Blade (Beginner Lv: 10 to Intermediate Lv: 1 | 0%):

The Sculpting Blade color will now be blue.

Using Sculpting Blade, you can now create and complete colossal sized statues.

Ignores the enemy's defense!

Chapter 9: The Great Sculpture

Vampires patrolled the area at regular intervals. That was a little bit unfortunate.

Weed was resting near a statue.

Bird of the main nut.

He ate the dish made from the Avian eggs and fruits of heaven.

Weed could take on a vampire by himself, and the Death Knight could fight one solo as well.

“Kyaah!”

“Van Hawk, you traitor!” screamed the vampire that Van Hawk was battling.

“I only follow the commands of the Master.”

The fierce battle was resolved after he parried a few times and Weed killed the two vampires.

Weed sat back down without having to say anything.

“Dispel Curse.”

Alveron’s mission was to wait at the statue for the vampires and use the spells in order.

“Divine Light, please dispel the restraints on their freedom from the power that is distorting their form.”

Light came down from the sky and covered the statue. The blackened surface of the statue melted away, like washing off ink. Inside the statues were paladins wearing the pattern of the Freya church.

“Die, Vampires!”

The paladins saw him wielding the sword of light as well as the presence of Alveron.

“I do not feel the slightest evil spirit coming from you. Are you from the church?”

“Oh, brother paladin! We have come to rescue everyone. Come with us and soon the suffering will be over.”

Alveron and the paladins broke out into a melodramatic scene.

The paladins returned to the cave and ate as if they were possessed. They began to beg Weed for food.

Weed put the food in a small bowl. After they ate, the paladins had an apologetic face as they held out the bowl.

“Thank you very much.”

“You’re welcome. There is still some left, so eat some more.”

The paladins handed their bowl to Weed.

Their share of food was placed in the bowl. Then he gave it to the paladins.

The paladins gulped to swallow their saliva. Hunger was the best seasoning of all.

They had never had food that tasted better than Weed’s.

This was all thanks to having Intermediate handicraft and intermediate cooking skills!

They created a subtle taste and enticing smell.

“How can we eat while Weed starves? I cannot.”

“This food is given to us by the Goddess. There is no way that I could eat it all by myself.”

Weed did not lie at all. In fact, eating just a little bit of high level cooking was enough to fill the satiety level.

He deliberately gave their share of food in small bowls. The paladins could not even begin to imagine the lethal and sophisticated meaning of such an act and continued to accept the bowl with gratitude. They would accept the bowl and words of gratitude would be spoken while they ate.

Alveron was using Meditation and Weed took out a carving knife.

Crunch The sound of sculpting.

As the paladins ate, they watched Weed work with his hands to create a beautiful sculpture.

It was the shape of a paladin fighting evil.

“You are very talented. It’s very beautiful.”

“It’s my hobby,” he replied.

The Order of the Goddess Freya was about beauty and abundance. For that reason, Weed’s intimacy level with the church’s paladins was very high to begin with.

Sculptors! A profession about loving art and beauty.

Chef! Delicious food was a symbol of abundance.

Weed was not acknowledged by other people, but the paladins from the church would respect him.

“Everybody let us pray.”

After hunting and eating food, Weed bowed his head forwards and prayed to the Goddess Freya.

“Thank you for the abundance of food and for giving us your blessing. Please continue to protect the peace of the continent from evil...”

Alveron was raised with the habit of praying.

Praying increased the intimacy of priests and paladins.

Like the soldiers of the Rosenheim Kingdom, the paladins were everywhere.

A total of 159 paladins and 38 priests were turned to stone. But wherever there was a stone paladin, there were certainly vampire guards.

“First of all, there is a need to increase our united strength,” Weed persuaded the paladins with such logic.

The Morata Province was overflowing with many wolves and evil monsters. They could hunt thousands of monsters in Morata.

But sometimes they rescued rebellious paladins.

“Now is not the time to do this! We should be searching for our brothers who are suffering instead of doing this!”

Occasionally the paladins would take their swords and tried to assault the village. Such a fearless attitude towards evil was becoming of a knight.

True Blood Vampire Clan!

To the paladins, they were most certainly the enemy.

Weed desperately blocked them. If he let them back into the village now, what were the chances that they would become victim to the vampires again?

“They should still be alive and we must remain hopeful. But if any of us should be defeated, then we shall forever suffer the ridicule of the vampire and what do you expect will happen to your brothers as a result?”

Weed persuaded the paladins while hunting.

It was frustrating, but the paladins had to agree with Weed.

He needed money. In Royal Road, he could trade in-game currency for real life cash.

You can obtain good equipment to sell, since there was no one else in Morata.

To trade items that anyone could bid on.

It was not easy to come to this region, so who would find these items?

He did not know if he could complete the quest on his own.

So, the conclusion was to increase their power. Yet he did not forget about the effects of sculptures.

“Don’t use wood. Stone is a good material to increase the proficiency of the skill.”

Weed was trying to find a suitably sized stone. However, in the snow-covered mountains, it was not easy to find the right stones. Moreover, since he had to remain still in order to sculpt and the harsh cold wind could make him sick. A lot of time was needed in order to make a sculpture.

“A bunch of rocks. Would it be possible to make a sculpture using

that?”

Weed was deeply immersed with what to do about the sculpture.

“It doesn’t have to be rock. Any other hard object would be nice...”

Weed looked across the village and the mountains.

A snow covered world.

The ground was covered in blocks of ice.

“Ice! A sculpture made of ice!”

A sculpture made of ice would be the best material to use. It could be simply cut and it was readily available. It was perfect in the cold north since it wouldn’t melt.

Since then, Weed and the paladins took a break in order to cut ice. With his carving knife, he made large chunks of ice.

Soon he started cutting into it to make a sculpture.

Weed and the brave paladins fought against the vampires.

Their presence was carved into the Morata Province.

Weed began to think of ideas for the theme of the statue. Of course, the model was still Seoyoon. Weed had no other choice since he had never seen anyone prettier.

He had learned that art stats and the sculpting skill increased depending on the meaning behind the sculptures.

Typically, in a town or a castle, a sculpture of a large object was more beneficial than a sculpture of a woman.

In the world, there existed countless masterpieces of woman and the most difficult sculpture to make was a beautiful woman.

The statue in Baran Village was able to make subtle smiles on people's faces but such a thing would create a strange atmosphere in Morata Province and thus required something else.

A cold appearance.

It was made with an ice cold exterior. The face was the same as when Weed had saw Seoyoon.

He tried to replicate the first sculpture he had made.

It was almost complete, but it felt strange, 'Is it because of the materials?'

Because it was made of ice, it felt vulnerable and weak.

‘If it doesn’t work and a failed product emerges...’

Weed strongly opposed the idea of failure.

Failure!

Failure was a painful aspect for a sculptor. A renowned sculptor would receive a large drop in fame.

Because a sculptor had to have passion to create a work made it even more difficult.

‘Should I give up?’

If he gave up now, he would slightly damage his fame.

It would become an unforgettable abandoned piece.

Weed used all his powers of observation in order to depict Seoyoon in the sculpture.

‘A strong, cold feeling...Murderer! Yes, lively eyes filled with hate and distrust of other people.’

As he remembered he continued to carve.

Weed began to change the clothing of Seoyoon's sculpture to armor.

Full plate armor!

On the sculpture was a steel plate that covered the whole body, giving it an intense look. The model for the armor was based on the ones that the paladins were wearing.

One would worry that it would look awkward, but the armor suited Seoyoon too well.

Finally, Weed tried to calmly carve the eyes in order to complete the piece.

‘Do not pay attention to what the window says. I will complete the eyes and it will not become a failure.’

An unbelievable coldness.

The allure of a brutal murderer.

Weed could feel the emotions of the sculpture in her eyes.

However, the eyes in the statue seemed to be their own. It's clear and innocent eyes.

‘The materials. This happened because of the materials. Stupid Weed! Had to make it out of ice instead of disposing it,’ Weed sighed.

When the statue was completed, it was sometime past noon. The sun reflected and shone brightly.

The sun’s rays systematically fell onto the beauty.

The beauty was shining in numerous brilliant colors. It seemed as if the light would wrapped around the nearby people.

The light changed the statue.

Ting

Statue Completed: The Ice Beauty (Masterpiece):

In the cold and desolate lands of the north. The feelings of the people and the earth allowed this statue of beauty to be born. Unlucky travelers that fall into difficulties and troubles will visit this small oasis. Here the travelers could receive sweet rest. An unbelievably high degree of perfection and beauty! An artist created a beauty with a mysterious atmosphere out of ice. A work deserving of praise.

Artistic Value: 750

Special Effects:

Health and Mana regeneration increased by 17% during the day.

Special resistance against ice-based magic.

+40% Cold resistance.

3% Chance to reflect an enemy attack.

30+ Attractiveness stat.

These effects do not stack with other statues.

Number of Masterpieces Created: 1

Ting

Level Up: Sculpture Mastery (Intermediate Lv: 5 | 0%):

Sculpting is more delicate and detailed.

Level Up: Handicraft (Intermediate Lv: 7 | 0%):

The ability to use hand tools has increased by an additional 5% and various other skills will be affected by the skill.

Fame has risen by 320 points (+320 FAME)

Art has risen by 45 point (+45 ART)

Endurance has risen by 4 points (+4 END

Perseverance has risen by 3 point (+3 PER)

Luck has risen by 40 points (+40 LUC)

Trembling

The paladins had caught a cold. As did Weed!

After having stood around in the desolate land, they did not

return to the cave until night. The temperature dropped. The level of the ice and snow in the Morata Province increased and the winds picked up in intensity.

The polar climates have lower temperatures and strong winds.

Snow and pieces of ice fell from the dark blizzards and ice storms.

The numerous pieces of ice that fell created a beautiful landscape when paired up next to the sky.

This occurrence was one of the four mysterious wonders of the northern continent.

Royal Road had created a fantastic environment and many people that visit it were amazed more than any movie that was ever made.

The snow covered ground in the north stretches almost endlessly.

Snow and ice would sweep over the ground in snowstorms.

However, only a small number of people have visited it!

Many usually taste death in the middle of the snow during a blizzard. Their hands and feet would stiffen and the cold would permeate into their bodies until they were frozen solid.

Weed enjoyed the pain since it increased his endurance stat, even if it's not what people usually would want to do.

The body would freeze immediately and be left out like a frozen shell and left to die miserably.

Every year, the northern lands were subject to over 30 snowstorms and blizzards. Weed wanted to call it a curse of God. The frigid that cold cut deep into his skin!

At night, the temperature fell and it became even colder. Outside the cave was a giant snowstorm. Ice fell dangerously in the middle of the night and they were forced to stop their hunting. Most of the paladins suffered from a cold.

“Ohh, if I knew that this would have happened then I would have learned the sewing skill...”

Weed was trembling from the cold inside the cave but he had no regrets.

They had built up a lot of loot. From hunting in the surrounding area, they managed to collect a lot. Among them items was wolf leather, which could be made into thick clothing to overcome the cold if one had sewing skills.

But Weed did not have such skills and was ultimately forced to fight the cold on his own.

Crackle

The bonfire was burning.

They had looted wood from the mountains during the day so that at night they could have a fire going. However, the cold air from the entrance of the cave let in a disastrous amount of air. They weren't going to die, but they were freezing.

“Ah-choo!”

Even with a cold, Weed managed to survive.

The cooking skill was useful. Eating hot stew managed to raise the resistance against cold and warmed the body.

When the ice and wind died down Weed and the paladins went outside of the cave once more.

The sculpture of the beauty was still standing even after the storm. The sculpture had fought a tough battle against nature.

It was damaged but not completely broken.

Ting

The Ice Beauty blessing is now in effect.

Thanks to it, they were able to resist the cold better. But it was weakened to only a 20% cold resistance.

Weed took the carving knife and walked over to the Ice Beauty.

‘Will this work?’

“Repair!”

He removed the extra pieces of ice on the sculpture and packed ice into other minor spots. Wherever it was broken, he attached new pieces of ice. Soon, it came back to its original appearance.

“So it can also repair statues...”

Weed had learned another piece of information. Info about classes was not made public and most professions had to make their own decisions to figure out more definite information.

‘Perhaps... maybe it might be possible here!’ Weed scratched his head as he thought.

Weed logged out.

Lee Hyun browsed through the websites. He was mainly looking for legends of the Arctic or monsters that live in cold climates.

He was looking for information.

Making sculptures raised the skill up well.

Copying the shape of a monster was not difficult. But that was not much of an achievement.

‘I can’t keep making sculptures of monsters. Now they don’t even give me 2% skill mastery.’

Sculpting and Handicraft skills required an additional 20% proficiency requirement each level.

Therefore it was very difficult to increase the level of the skills.

Intermediate skills were not that different from the beginner level, but now it required a certain level of inspiration. The skill would not increase from simply making sculptures of the things around him.

The advanced stage required 50% more training than the intermediate stage for production skills.

Looking beyond their capabilities, production classes were far more difficult than a combat based class.

‘I should make something big to get more artistic value. It will probably raise the skill up a lot too...’

Then Lee Hyun accessed a site that was associated with the Continent of Magic.

Dragons were classified as the ultimate monster of a fantasy continent. Lee Hyun had hunted quite a few dragons in the Continent of Magic.

Powerful, vibrant magical attacks. Incredible breath attack and colossal defense.

He had reached the highest level in the Continent of Magic, he had needed to use a few tricks or he would never have dared to go up against a dragon.

Of those dragons there was the Ice Dragon!

A dragon with a size of over 150 meters and it was capable of a powerful ice breath.

He remembered the time he had hunted one.

“The tail...yeah and then attach the head later. So I have to start

from the feet and move up the body.”

Weed reconnected and started to collect chunks of ice.

Because it was immediately after a snowstorm, there was plenty of ice around. The ice piled around was larger than the average house. Walking around in the snow, people would have ice piled up to their chest.

“I would have died if there was nowhere to hide from the snowstorm!”

Frozen by the cold or struck dead by a chunks of ice! In the storm, death would come from one of the two. The only city in the north was in the vicinity of a large mountain. If it was unable to prevent snow in the mountains, then the village would not exist. But the northern town was frightening.

“In the past, the strongest military power of the northern kingdom was forced to be stronger or else they would not have been able to live in such an environment.”

Weed picked up chunks of ice from the surrounding area. He made a rough outline and then piled ice on top. The blocks of ice began to be stacked in layers on top of each other.

“A little bit at a time...”

Weed and the paladins had come back from hunting the wolves.

The blocks of ice that were stacked in a pile were now firmly solidified. There was no need for individual blocks but to connect all of them.

Weed had the paladins create a huge mountain of ice. A chunk of ice large enough to be a mountain!

The pile of ice was several stories tall and kept rising higher.

Hwiyiiiing – kureureureung!

The snowstorm had come again.

Ice stacked on top of the giant pile of ice.

Weed kept piling up the snow for two more ice storms and soon there was a mountain made of ice.

The will of humans and the power of Nature!

The two had worked together to achieve the impossible.

“From here on out, it’s my turn.” Weed said as he pulled out the Zahab carving knife.

Ice sculpting.

He had created the Ice Beauty with his hands and suffered through the process.

It was a piece that required fine detail. If he put as much detail into a sculpture of this size, then it would take a year to finish and he did not have that kind of time.

Weed cut drastically and added ice sometimes.

The sculpture gradually began to unfold.

It was now possible to sculpt.

A bonus of the Intermediate Sculpting skills was the supposed special effects to carving.

Weed had to pay attention as to not fall from the mountain of ice. He connected a piece of rope to the top. Very much like rock climbing.

Tak tak tak!

Pieces and chunks of ice were being cut off by the knife and fell down. They would fall to the ground and shatter. Weed looked down from above to see the bottom of the sculpture.

“Ohhh...”

To fall to his death.

This fear was suppressed while he worked on the sculpting. However, hanging from a high place in the freezing cold was no joke. Strong winds would blow and the rope that he was hanging on would shift and he could not move.

Weed finished his first goal for the sculpture which was the torso. The central part of it was the giant torso that was the size of a mountain. The circumference of the torso was more than an extraordinary 100 meters long.

Now it was time for the tail and the legs.

The legs were deformed to be very small. However they were thick enough to hold up a mountain of ice.

Small, thick legs.

A long tail lay hanging from the torso. The length of the tail itself was tens of meters.

The last part was the head. It protruded boldly from the body with a long neck, with its mouth spread wide, and its face glancing over from the side.

Its mouth resembled that of a crocodile.

Long whiskers extended from its face.

Its eyes were fierce and full of power.

The moment Weed finished the sculpture, it was engulfed in light.

Ting

Statue Completed: The Ice Dragon (Masterpiece):

Artistic passion and great success often impress young people, but sometimes they are impressed by the things that they are not aware of. A success made through the power of nature! In the northern region lives the pure-hearted dragon that detests evil. The dragon acts as a saint that keeps the order of the land.

Artistic value: 2500

Special Effects:

+30% Health and Mana recovery speed during the day.

+70% Resistance to the cold

+40% Magic resistance

+35% Maximum health

These effects do not stack with other statues.

Blessing of the Dragon has activated!

The Dragon's Intimidation degrades the status of all monsters in the area around the Ice Dragon.

Monsters cannot come near the Ice Dragon.

Effect does not overlap with other sculptures.

Number of Grand Sculptures made: 1

Number of Masterpieces Created: 2

Ice Dragon has been added to the Wonders of the North.

If, in the future, Ice Dragon is given life then Weed will be given ownership of Ice Dragon and it will be loyal to Weed.

All stats have increased by 1 for having made a grand sculpture.

Ting

Level Up: Sculpture Mastery (Intermediate Lv: 6 | 0%):

Sculpting is more delicate and detailed.

Level Up: Handicraft (Intermediate Lv: 8 | 0%):

The ability to use hand tools has increased by an additional 5% and various areas will be affected by the skill.

Fame has risen by 850 points (+850 FAME)

Art has risen by 64 point (+64 ART)

Endurance has risen by 49 points (+49 END)

Perseverance has risen by 16 point (+16 PER)

All Stats have risen by 12 points (+12 ALL STATS)

He did not imagine that he would be able to use chunks of ice to make a monster.

The Ice Dragon Statue.

In comparison to the actual thing, Ice Dragon looked perfectly the same.

Using ice as the material for the Ice Dragon was the best answer.

Daring to use materials that other structures would never dream of. That made it a work of art.

Health and mana regeneration increased by 30%. That meant that the rate of hunting would last 30% longer. The increased resistance to the cold reduced the biggest obstacle in the north which would also help.

Resistance to magic and increase in maximum health.

The increase in stats.

This, along with his combat abilities made their chances of survival increase greatly.

If Alveron or the paladins die, then the quest would be over so Weed had to support them.

While Weed went around hunting and rescuing paladins. As did Death Knight Van Hawk.

“I will never approve of someone such as you!”

The paladins explicit complaints towards the Death Knight were revealed. It was too much for the followers of the faith to accept Van Hawk, who had been a servant of Barkhan.

Weed went to the Death Knight side to sort out the problem.

“You mean the Death Knight? This is the reason for his purpose.”

Weed beat up the Death Knight. After dying pathetically in front of the paladins, he was reverse summoned. A while after the Death Knight died, the Red Necklace of Life would turn crimson again and could be summoned once more.

“Bloodhounds.”

“We can do this.”

The paladins went upon the task of taking down the monsters.

‘Really strong’

Weed nodded.

When he hunted in the Rosenheim Kingdom, he lead the recruits using his bow and sword against the goblins as well as using traps.

But to the paladins, they could neglect those things. Their attacks were based on divine power and crushed the bones of the monsters.

Weed brandished his sword against the undead to collect experience. 20% of the experience was given to the Death Knight, but compared to hunting in Lavias he was able to collect much better experience here.

Hunting was much safer and sustainable with Alveron’s assistance. In a few months, Weed managed to get the paladins to around level 220 and others became equal to the True Blood Vampires with levels over 270. It was a performance worth tears. If it had not been for the Ice Dragon Statue, then it would have taken more time. One or two paladins may have ended up dead.

“Now let us begin to save the rest of our brothers.”

*

The 500 Dojang practitioners Geomchi’s.

The practitioners all chose similar type classes. Training their bodies, the sword was the first thing they learned in the game. They were noobs at everything else.

“It’s strange that eating bread fills the satiety level.”

“Drinking water also relieves thirst.”

“When I say status window, an impossible floating window appears!”

Such were the practitioners!

Several Geomchi’s had entered the game and ate the starting bread and were now going hungry.

Geomdulchi masked his face as he watched them.

“How is it that none of you have any bread left!”

“Do we hope for a miracle?”

“ ... ”

They could no longer receive barley bread and the Geomchi’s were now suffering from hunger. The Geomchi’s were starving

and waiting to die, but they could only hit the scarecrow. And then Pale came.

“Please buy me some bread.”

“Thank you!”

The Geomchi's closed their eyes as they begged.

“We are not the type of people to be begging others for help. However since Weed is my disciple, isn't it only natural that I should accept his help?”

The job was not what they had expected, but Pale and Surka accepted it nonetheless.

500 powerful men.

They instantly lost all backbone as they rushed Pale to go buy bread looking with their scary hungry eyes, so he went and bought 50 thousand barley bread.

For the 50 thousand barley bread, the price of single barley bread was 3 copper so with 1 silver he could buy 33 pieces and 1 gold could buy 3,300 pieces of bread.

Romuna, Surka, and Irene had grown up with so much money that they had never witnessed such pitiful people such as the 500

Geomchi's.

Anyways, through a trial and error, the Geomchi's finished beating the scarecrows in the training center.

4 weeks!

They really did not sleep for 4 weeks, and finished hitting the scarecrow.

505 people that were like Weed.

'Ohh, I'm so tired...'

Honestly, if they had done it alone they would not have completed it.

Along with Geomchi, many of the trainees and instructors were tired and wanted to hurry and stop the training.

But Geomchi had declared that they would not leave until they passed the beginner's training center.

If a single person did not pass, then the remaining 504 would have to wait for that one person.

"Such horror..."

If they remained behind then their conscience could not bear it! They were too afraid to take a rest. The practitioners were hitting the scarecrow like madmen.

“1697239!”

“1697240!”

“1697241!”

After Geomchi had finished the beginner’s training center, Geomchi reported the number of the other successful Geomchi’s. Aside from Geomchi, the instructors and one trainee had finished their training and were waiting for the remaining 499.

Ting

Agility has risen by 1 point (+1 AGI)

Finally, the last part of the training center was finished.

“Master, the training is finished.”

“Good effort.”

“It was very difficult.”

All of the Geomchi's got together in a group. They had waited together to pass the beginner training center. The Instructor approached with a heart-warming smile. Then he took out some swords one by one.

“This is given to those that have completed the beginner training center. It is yours to take.”

“I know. Thank you.”

Geomchi thanked the instructor as he inspected his sword.

Their usernames were based on a single pattern.

Their names were in the initial order of the dojang!

His name followed the order as well.

The instructor smiled warmly.

“Do you have any questions? By the way, at this beginner training center, you are the 522nd person to...”

“I do not. I do not need any help. Thank you.”

He had heard the 504 other practitioners approached by the instructor to say the same thing. It was like they were unable to get the instructor’s voice out of their ears.

The Geomchi’s had been waiting for the rest of them to finish up.

However, now the instructor said something a little different.

“Since such a large number of you have passed this training center, it could only mean that good things will happen to this kingdom. I look forward to the day that you become valiant knights.”

“Yea, whatever. I don’t care. See you later.”

The Geomchi’s left the training center.

The game was finally beginning, but they were still noobs.

“Well, we need to get a job so let’s go to the guild.”

“Master, can we all come?”

“I don’t see any reason to not come! Is there?”

“As befitting of the Master.”

“Master, it is exciting that we will get inspected for a class.”

All of the 505 Geomchi’s strode around the streets.

They were all dressed the same and moved in unison.

“Who the hell are these people?”

“Are they holding a performance?”

“Look at that. They’re all holding the same sword.”

“Hey, they’re the guys from the training center!”

“Are they?”

“You mean those strange people...”

The Geomchi’s had already become a little famous but they did not care. They stood there, engulfed in the joy of the game for the very first time, the excitement, as they went to the guild.

After a while, one by one, the Geomchi’s came out of the guild

smiling.

“Catch a fox?”

“Collect 300 fox leathers...”

“So it isn’t to catch a fox, but to collect fox leathers.”

“For a formal student of a dojang for more than two years? That is too easy.”

“Ha, ha, ha, foxes!” The practitioners laughed loudly.

More Geomchi’s laughed.

“Kkeolkkeolkkeol! They’re thinking too little of us.”

“Master, I do not think we have to do this alone. We can work together to collect the leather.”

“No Geomchi². When you hunt you can earn experience for your level. Also, this is our first quest. Don’t you want to see what you are able to do?”

“Yes, indeed. Let us go catch some foxes.”

“Ha, I did not expect that I would first use my sword against a

fox!”

“It is an honor for the fox.”

The people that were listening to the Geomchi’s conversation thought they were ridiculous. They seemed to be coming from a completely different world.

“Do you have any idea how strong a fox is?”

“They look like beginners without a job...”

“I couldn’t even catch a raccoon.”

The low levels ignored the Geomchi’s even more. They were unable to even think of hunting foxes. At their levels it was difficult to even hunt raccoons or rabbits.

“Once they die, they should come to their senses.”

“I don’t think that there were any guild quests in progress to hunt fox pelts. Once the sun rises, they’ll be in town trying to buy the pelts.”

“I bet that there’s going to be a stack of corpses in front of the castle.”

In the midst of the commotion, Pale and Surka could be seen at a distance.

“It’s so pitiful.”

“Yea, it’s too sad.”

“Poor foxes...”

“...”

They knew something about Weed and the practitioners that others did not know so Pale and the girls had a feeling about what was going to happen.

They had built up their base stats. However, to the other users it seemed that they were going to die...

“Oh! We should get going.”

“Let’s see how this goes.”

Geomchi and the practitioners went out the east gate.

The basic monsters such as foxes, rabbits, raccoon, and porcupines were outside playing around.

They were excellent at jumping and hunting noobs.

The fox was one of the monsters that stood out the most.

“Whoa, ah!”

“Let’s go!”

The Geomchi’s stampeded out into the field.

The fox was lying down with its tail in front sleeping. Unfortunately it was run down by a sword. This was the fox’s first fight against a sword and it just had to be a large number of swords wielding Geomchis!

With a fluid motion to avoid the attacks, he gently stabbed the sword towards the fox’s empty abdomen.

Ting

FATAL CRITICAL HIT!

The fox turned gray and died.

“What, why was it so easy?”

Geomchi muttered aloud. The rest of them that had watched the monster’s chest saw that it was true.

“Who killed a fox?”

“The fox must have been hurt. So it must have died right on the spot.”

“It doesn’t make sense that it would die so fast, look for traps. It doesn’t look right.”

“I don’t think so! I think we’re mistaken.”

“Is that right?”

However, then another fox came.

The practitioners dodge its silly attacks and attacked in response with their sword.

Peobeobeok!

Only one or two hits!

With their stats and skills, the 50% sword mastery boost, the damage they were doing was high.

“Oh, this is fun!”

“Yea, but why is the fox so weak?”

The Geomchi’s brutally killed any of the foxes they caught.

From squirrels to foxes, rabbits and raccoons; they killed them all. In the end, by nightfall, the higher level wolves came out!

The wolves were tough as they revealed their sharp protruding teeth.

The practitioners had secured the castle of Serabourg and wiped out all the mobs. The crowd could only open their mouths in shock at the sight of them.

“Unbelievable!”

“How do they do that...!”

Pale could only nod as a result.

“Well...”

“Yea, really.”

“I think I’m scared.”

“Irene, why is that?”

“It’s like seeing more than 500 people like Weed...”

“ ... ”

For the mobs of rabbits and wolves, that was without a doubt an era of suffering.

The practitioners were carried away from the feeling of freely wielding a sword and using it to directly hit a monster.

Then a certain wolf that seldom shows itself appeared.

Awooooo!

The Silver Wolf’s roar.

Its silver fur was gently flowing in the wind.

Its legs were elegantly outstretched and it boasted sturdy thighs.

Then Geomchi spoke up.

“It looks like we catch something nice.”

“Master, this one has better stuff.”

“Is that so? It gives better items?”

“That’s right!”

Geomchi charged.

Kaeaeaeng!

The wolves left the world with one scream at a time.

The Geomchi’s led a frenzy of slaughter in front the Citadel of Serabourg.

Sword mastery and rewards!

Experience!

Items!

Even the practitioners that had only been using the sword for a

couple years became devoted.

Their soul no longer felt stifled.

They could unleash their sword skills here.

Kill monsters, get experience and level, eat better food.

For the practitioners it was good to be strong.

The reason was simple.

‘The spirit is the body!’

They did not want to be weak. They wanted to fight strong monsters.

Get good items. Get more money.

The fact that the rabbits and wolves dropped copper was fantastic since it mean that they could buy barley bread and they would not starve.

They could not stop since it was not enough!

“Keuhahahaha!”

“I will kill you!”

The crowd that had been watching them were excited at first, but as it dragged on they began to tremble in fear for their futures...

*

Thanks to Alveron and the higher level paladins, they were able to deal with 4 to 5 vampires at once. These were usually the vampires guarded the statues.

The paladin forces only attacked a few times during the day.

That way, they were able to rescue over 30 paladins. He was able to further enhance his cooking skills by feeding the ever increasing number of paladins, but there was an issue. The problem wasn't the cooking but the ingredients!

So they had to start hunting for food. Dozens of paladins went to look for a good hunting ground for food ingredients, after which they needed to repair their armor. But during all of this hunting and repairing, he had been neglecting to raise his sculptor skills.

Other than his outstanding combat skills, he needed more time than other people to get stronger because he needed to improve Handicraft.

So he needed to raise his sculpting and various other skills as much as possible. Even if he had good combat capability, Weed had the hidden advantage of being a support class.

The best thing he could do was to support the paladins in the upcoming battles.

‘It’s fortunate. Other than one factor, there is no time limit...’

The quest to recover Fargo’s crown and rescue the petrified paladins had no particular time limit. Perhaps because the person that received the quest would have no time to hunt, and because of food.

There were over dozens of paladins that you had to feed. You had to watch over the amount of food left after each fight until the quest was complete; however Weed was always travelling with his seasonings and cooking skills.

To him, all the things in the forest and mountains were suitable for the cooking skill.

A wide variety of materials.

Meat from monsters could be good materials for soup, along with nuts and herbs.

He was familiar with how his geography played a part in his life.

A full-time job!

This was the place to exercise the power of the skills he had learned.

The number of paladins continued to increase, as did the number of people crowding the cave.

The effectiveness of the Ice Dragon Statue was becoming more apparent.

The larger the number of paladins, the more evident the effect the statue was having on the group.

It was always better to have more people.

Weed led as many paladins as possible to defeat the monsters.

Ting

Leadership has risen by 3 points (+3 LDR)

Charisma has risen by 2 points (+2 CHR)

Leading the paladins had increased his leadership and charisma by a fearsome amount so far.

His stats were increasing even faster than his level, but he didn't complain in the slightest. He thought of it as a sort of investment in raising his stats.

The cooking skill was also growing very quickly.

Using the miscellaneous things from the mountain, he struggled with experimentation to develop new dishes while conserving ingredients. Thanks to this, he was able to create a new recipes of porridge using grass and bark. It tasted fine because of Weed's cooking skills.

‘It has come to a good fruition.’

He had used leftover ingredients to make the dish. In the midst of mixing it together, a shocking thing happened.

A secret of the cooking skill! Weed managed to solve one of them. In fact, the secret was very simple and wasn't very secret, but it worked.

Praying together to the Goddess Freya increased the intimacy to the church...

Ting

New Stat: Faith

In return for the praise and devotion to God, special abilities will be granted by God.

Weed created a stat that was usually exclusive to priests and paladins.

Faith was known to influence the magical powers of the gods. However since Weed could not use divine magic, it was a totally useless stat.

“Open Stats Window”

Character Name: Weed

Alignment: Neutral

Profession: Legendary Moonlight Sculptor

Title: None

Level: 205

Fame: 3845

Health: 7760

Mana: 6471

Strength: 465 (+118)

Agility: 405 (+38)

Vitality: 134 (+38)

Wisdom: 136 (+38)

Intelligence: 154 (+48)

Fighting Spirit: 323 (+38)

Endurance: 162 (+38)

Perseverance: 379 (+38)

Art: 714 (+118)

Leadership: 133 (+38)

Charisma: 368 (+38)

Luck: 91 (+38)

Faith: 1 (+388)

Offence: 1069

Defense: 133

Magic Resistance:

Fire: 10%

Water: 10%

Earth: 20%

Black magic: 65%

Weed's stats really were abnormal.

While hunting, he intentionally gave up experience in order to increase his stats. He had a larger diversity of stats and more stat points for a character of the same level. It did not take a genius to figure out that he had increased his fighting spirit and perseverance stats to over 300 by spilling his own blood.

However, that was not all.

He had reached intermediate in several skills, gaining bonus stats from them as well and from the various different types of equipment that changed various stats. Because of that, his strength, agility, and perseverance stats were higher than normal. The Faith stat had also just been created. His job was that of the moonlight sculptor; he had intermediate sword mastery, intermediate cooking, and intermediate sculpting mastery that added to his stats!

He was wearing the Rose Engraved Gloves, Agatha's Holy Sword, and the Ring of the High Priest as well as the addition of status

effects. Therefore his Faith stat was one of his highest stats being almost 400 points!

In terms of stat points it was enough to overwhelm an ordinary paladin. Of course, most of his items had effects on them.

If a stat did not exist, then it would not affect the character at all. However now that the Faith stat had been created, Weed was now being granted effects from the stat.

‘No matter how I look at it, the stat is useless. However one day... there might some use for it in the future.’

Unexpectedly, after the Faith stat had been created, the look in the paladins and priests eyes towards Weed had changed. They now followed his command immediately and even expressed admiration sometimes.

“Leader, we initially had doubts about your leadership, but from now on we shall follow your command.”

“You are a companion of the church!”

“The power of our faith shall guide us!”

Because of Weed’s high Faith, the paladins now acted differently.

NPC paladins were usually given the stat at level five and

increased depending on their level.

Because they were a skilled swords class they needed to evenly distribute stats into endurance, strength, and agility. Since they were a class related to magic, they had to put points into wisdom and knowledge. Since they were followed the faith of God, their faith stat was around 200 to 300.

But Weed's faith stat in respect to the paladins was nearly 400 thanks to his equipped items.

Needless to say, the priest over time usually had more. But after hunting with the paladins he cooked food and repairing equipment for them during the break otherwise they would be able to hunt.

They were extremely addicted to his food.

As time passed, soon Weed and the paladins were standing near the village with the giant black castle in front of them.

Alveron removed the curse from the last of the paladins that were still trapped.

“Divine light please free the power of restraints that are twisted here.”

The light came down and dispelled the curse on the statue.

“Under the command of the High Priest we have come to rescue you.”

At this point, the paladins kneeled in front of Weed to be informed of the situation.

“The church is here to recover Fargo’s crown and be rid of the True Blood Vampire Clan that threatens the peace of the village.”

“From here on, I would like to follow the noble commander’s commands.”

The paladins were keen to follow Weed’s commands thanks to the increase in his leadership and faith stats.

By then, he had completely secured the village.

A total of 159 paladins and 38 priests.

A grand total of 199 people including Weed and Alveron.

The tremendous giant black castle felt overwhelming standing near it. Bards would undoubtedly sing tales of its horror.

Ravens ominously circled the building and the paladins trembled.

“A total of 5 floors huh...” Weed counted as he looked up the at the castle.

The makeshift windows had curtains covering them and were barricaded with wood on the outsides.

“Okay. I’ll take on that challenge.”

Weed led the priests and paladins into the castle.

Kureureureung!

He simultaneously pushed both of the doors open at once.

“ ... ”

Weed took a step back quietly.

“Let us advance! In the name of the goddess we will take out the True Blood Vampires and liberate the Province of Morata!”

“Woowaah!” the paladins and priests roared behind him.

Weed and the paladins entered inside the building and then the door slammed shut by itself. As if nothing had ever happened.

Chapter 10: Battle Of The Black Castle

“Living humans!”

“Paladins!”

“The curse on the paladins in the town was removed!”

As soon as they entered the black castle they were greeted by about 50 vampires.

Their eyes were shining with bloodlust as they grabbed their flapping cloaks with their long nails and flew across the space inside the castle to close the distance between them and the paladins.

Some of them used magic to summon bats. The vampire bats could also deal a small amount of damage!

“Light, to defeat thy darkness! Holy Light!”

“Light, to defeat thy darkness! Holy Light!”

Alveron and the nearby priests used holy magic simultaneously.

“Aaaaaa!”

“It’s too bright!”

The vampires clamored to cover their eyes as the bright light sprayed down on them. The vampires that had been airborne were dropping down.

Members of the clergy usually had magic to weaken the ability of the undead and creatures of the darkness.

Typical healing spells were powerful offensive magic against the undead and vampires.

Amidst the bright light show holy magic, the paladins brandished their swords gallantly.

Chukaak!

Vampire blood sprayed everywhere.

It was pretty much a one-sided massacre.

Until now, none of the paladins or priests had died. They overwhelmed the 50 vampires with sheer numbers. They weren’t a very difficult opponent.

Backed by the priests’ holy magic, the paladins were able to attack the vampires. The paladins did not have much risk to their

lives since the priests were constantly healing and dispelling curses.

Weed also took on one of the vampires.

“Sword Dance!” The Imperial Formless Sword Technique’s 4th form!

Weed danced around brandishing his sword flamboyantly.

He actually just moved around monotonously and struck the vital points of the enemy, but the skill created after images.

He went to attack and destroy while creating almost no openings that could be exploited by the vampires and while they were busy attacking in a wrong direction, he would close the gap.

Ting

You have leveled up!

Weed hadn’t taken care of a vampire for a long time so his level rose by one.

Prior to leveling up, his experience had been at 56%, but more than 226 experience points went to the 20% leech.

‘Ohh...it’s too good to boost up!’

It was unfair that he had had to give up the kills to the paladins until now. In the plains and village he had not hunted so that the paladins would get strong faster, but now he didn’t need to do so anymore.

Therefore Weed was hunting.

Whenever a vampire died, it dropped some items.

Ting

Item: Vampire Fangs:

Durability: 50/50

Penetrates the enemy’s body to absorb blood. Though unusual, it can be used in alchemy to create items.

Restriction:

Level 300

Effects:

If used to create a weapon, then it can absorb the enemy's vitality!

Ting

Item: Vampire Cloak:

Durability: 80/80

A cloak worn by the nobility of the darkness. It was very appropriate for its owner. Flight is possible when transformed.

Restriction:

Level 250

Equipped:

Bat transformation: In battle, it is possible to fly away.

When transformed, the defense from equipment does not apply.

-50 Faith

+25 Appeal to woman

-25 All stats

And 3 gold and 25 silver.

Vampires were very rich monsters.

Weed looked around as he pocketed the items. The paladins had finished the battle and were waiting for him. The level of the paladins was much higher, so they caught the vampires quickly.

“Let us move to the first floor. Alveron, remove the curse from the statues.

The first floor had a total of 50 petrified paladins.

Alveron removed the curses while Weed and the paladins searched for others captives.

There were a few vampires in the nearby rooms, but they were not enough to stop the heavily armed paladins.

They searched the first floor without much resistance.

All of the rooms on the first floor.

There were also numerous other statutes, they appeared to be farmers and villagers.

“Alveron, remove the curse on them.”

“Yes.”

Alveron’s holy magic freed each of them and they fell to the floor.

Of the many people, the bearded elder spoke up softly.

“Oh, are you our saviors?”

“Saviors?”

“We are the residents of the Morata Province from when the

forces of darkness invaded. We were here suffering, incapacitated. We have waited for our savior to come...”

“...”

“We have been waiting for a very long time for you to come. All of the villagers of Morata Province have been turned to stone, our families and our brethren. Savior, please have pity and help us! As a reward we will give you whatever we can!”

Ting

Quest: The Curse on the Province of Morata:

The True Blood Vampires occupying the territory have turned all the villagers into distasteful stone decorations. They spend their time in pain. Save the people of Morara!

Difficulty: B

Quest requirement:

To be able to cast, or have someone who can cast, Tier 2 Holy Magic to remove the curse.

Rewards:

Prismatic Cloth

Weed did not worry too much.

With plenty of clerics in the party to remove the curse from the statues in the city, the quest was triggered because Weed had brought Alveron to find the Crown of Fargo.

Difficulty B...

He already had one. He had been commissioned to defeat the vampires in the black castle anyways.

“We will make it our duty to see that they are saved.”

Ting

You have accepted the quest!

Weed and the paladins went up to the second floor.

Nearly 150 True Blood Vampires awaited their arrival.

Other than vampires, there were also minions with them, numbering nearly 100 in total, and altogether there were 250 enemies.

With the number of paladins they had rescued on the first floor added to their ranks, it became too simple.

“Attack!”

“Ah waoooooh!”

“Let us fight against the evil horde!”

The paladins had received blessings and protection magic from the priests and were now raiding the vampires. The paladins were well organized, but soon after the fight began the vampires started their counterattack.

“Dark Barrier!”

“Dark Arrow!”

“Healing Hand!”

The magic clashed terribly.

Holy magic from the priests spread to fight the darkness being shot from the dark bows.

Weed did not engage in direct combat. With such a large clash of magic, it was possible to end up dead from a random attack.

“Alveron, don’t idle by, fight hard.”

“Yes Weed-nim.”

“Use more power! Provide more support! Paladins with low health get in the back!”

Weed commanded the forces from the rear. The paladins were lined up against the dense number of vampires. They were the best defensive tankers that there could be, since the priest had layered protective magic on them. On the side, the priests were instructed to constantly support.

They attacked the remainder of the vampires.

Weed had separated the vampires into groups. Defending against the enemy attack and wiping out the weaker side. This approach was more convenient for the priests to prevent them from dying,

taking advantage of their supportive role to also prevent the paladins from dying.

They would switch to the offensive for a reckless assault, then to the defensive when they were in danger, to give the priests time to heal as well as use holy magic to launch another offensive.

The densely packed paladins and priests were united in battle, fighting in the most optimal conditions.

“Let’s us attack!”

“The Commander ordered us to attack!”

For the paladins it was not an easy battle, but they eventually won.

From hunting the high level vampires, the paladins had been able to increase their level.

Furthermore, the support from the priests was enough to overwhelm the True Blood Vampires’ individual blessings.

On the second floor, 30 paladins and 40 priests were rescued. In the meantime, Weed had the villagers rescued as well.

‘They’re getting kind of hungry; I’ll have to do something.’

Weed took out a pot and started cooking.

Usually the priests and paladins would have watched him cook carefully, but now they were doing everything they could to get farther away.

Looking at the pot made his eyes hurt.

It hurt so much that Weed was crying as he made the stew.

“Is it alright to eat it?”

“Please...”

“It is overflowing with faith.”

Weed handed out bowls of stew to the paladins. The ingredients for it were the Avian eggs and the Fruit of Heaven!

Finishing the quest required a significant amount of risk. The fruits of heaven increased intellect and luck, so it was good to eat it before going to hunt. Luck increased the item and money drop rates from monsters.

So now was the time to use the ingredients. He used the Avian eggs and the Fruit of Heaven to make a stew.

In addition, he added one more ingredient to the mix: garlic.

The stew with plenty of garlic formed a resistance against vampires to some extent.

“Woohuk”

“Puaahhh, it’s too spicy, I need some snow.”

Tears trickled down the paladins’ faces as they ate the stew.

There was a tough battle ahead, so there wasn’t just stew. Weed cried as he put together dishes such as pickled garlic, garlic salad and garlic sandwich one after another. The relatively docile priests now had tears running down their faces and runny noses from the strong garlic.

The third floor of the black castle had 200 True Blood Vampires waiting for them.

“Khalkkalkkal! It seems that they have forgotten the horrors of dark magic. The fool’s need to be reminded of who their Master is. Charm!”

“Oh look, that knight is coming to us. He has become dominated by our spell. Wonderful!”

The Vampire Queen had appeared.

They tried their illusionary magic to seduce the paladins.

“You heinous creatures! Your vampire magic will not work on me!”

“This is crazy!”

The paladins began to attack with their swords as they let the priests take care of support.

The vampires tried to use their magic against the priests to control the paladins.

Once they had entered the black castle they were unable to leave.

Without the Ice Dragon statue increasing the priests and paladin fighting spirit, they were affected by the charm magic.

But not all the priests were affected, “Those filthy bastards! Those disobedient rascals! These vampires deserve to die.”

“This world needs to be freed from darkness!”

“Goddess Freya, bring your followers back onto the right path. Cleansing!”

Alveron and the rest of the sane priests used cleansing magic.

Weed thought as he analyzed the situation.

“First, kill the Vampire Queen and the crisis ends.”

But the Vampire Queen was well protected in the middle of the enemies. Weed would get killed before he would be able to kill them.

“Alveron, heal the priests before the paladins.”

“Yes Weed-nim.”

Alveron finished purifying the priests. The priests then healed the knights that were under the spell. The priests were doing a good job, but the Vampire Queen was constantly interfering.

Weed had originally planned to have the paladins and priests fight the vampires no matter how the enemies were arranged. His formation with priests as the rear support would not fail.

However, the magic caused the paladins to attack their own colleagues and made the priests unable to heal.

The vampire attacks had been suppressed to some extent because of the strong smell of garlic on the paladins, but it was only a matter of time. It was a huge emergency!

Weed radiated as he gathered his mana.

“Hey! You! Guys! Go! Attack! The! Damn! Vampires!”

Ting

Skill: You have used Lion’s Roar:

Allied army’s Fighting Spirit increases by 200%

For 5 minutes, leadership will be increased by 170%

Any confusion is cleared

He used the Lion’s Roar skill that he had trained in the mountains.

A high intensity shout came out. At that moment, all of the Vampire Queen’s tactics became useless.

Weed’s leadership was now at a sufficient enough level to

command the paladins and priests. Without the leadership and charisma stat, the paladins and priests couldn't be commanded. There would also be higher level soldiers that would not listen to commands. Under the influence of his higher leadership, the paladins followed Weed's absolute commands. They were faster and more accurate in following out his commands.

His Lion's Roar range extended to the area of the vampires as well. With the advanced level skill the opponent's movements was suppressed as an additional effect.

“Die!”

The paladins drove their blades to rip apart the vampires. The Vampire Queen tried to use her illusionary skills to manipulate the paladins, but it failed. She lacked the physical abilities that other vampires usually had. Weed used the Lion's Roar skill frequently regardless of the mana-cost.

“Hyaahat! Die!”

All of the vampires launched an attack on Weed.

Weed was the target of the vampires, since his Lion's Roar skill made him a top-priority target.

With great difficulty, Weed and the paladins managed to clear the third floor.

With the soldiers that they rescued from the floor, they now had 300 paladins and 100 priests!

That was everyone that the Church of Freya had dispatched to retrieve the Crown of Fargo.

4th floor!

The remaining 300 True Blood Vampires were waiting. Thankfully, with the addition of the rescued paladins and priests, Weed obtained a complete victory due to the significant increase in soldiers.

Now, in the black castle, all the True Blood Vampires had been defeated except for one.

The Vampire Lord!

Tori was the clan leader with a level of 400. He was also known to be the one that had the Crown of Fargo.

“Please rescue her...”

The daughter of one of the villagers had been turned into stone and had been placed on the 5th floor because of her beauty. Her name was Prina.

A common trait of vampires was that they enjoyed decorations

such as beautiful girls.

“It would have been nice if it had been another side quest.”

Weed looked over at the paladins and priests.

There were a solid 300 paladins and 100 priests now.

‘If only I could keep them as my soldiers...’

But they were paladins of the Church of Freya and no matter how high their friendship level was, Weed would not be able to get them to follow him. Thus he was only allowed to lead the troop until the quest was completed.

It was human nature to win a battle as easily as possible and Weed hated to sacrifice time. Battle should be fought as efficiently as possible. Only fight the vampires if you are able to defeat them. If you couldn't win, then don't fight. It was important to win without losing anything.

So far Weed had spent a lot of time to raise the level of the priests and paladins to a sufficient amount. Through the combination of the paladins and priests, the conditions to win the battle had been cleared. However, you had to be even more cautious if you were winning. You had to take the victory safely by taking turns in fighting and resting.

Normally Weed hunted alone, but that was more reckless than

supporting the group. Knowing that, it was impossible to abandon the quests that he had taken since he had already come this far.

Weed went up to the fifth floor with the paladins and priests. There was an aristocratic young man sitting in a golden chair.

The Vampire Lord Tori!

He had skin as white as a porcelain doll and dark black hair. He had a slim body, resembling a woman's. He wore a jeweled crown on his head and he was handsome, but the contrast between his pale, white skin and his black clothing was grotesque.

Weed looked over at the crown that was on his head.

‘I presume that’s the Crown of Fargo.’

At last, the goal had been sighted. However, getting his hands on it and finishing it was going to be the most difficult. Currently Tori was appreciating a statue of a beautiful girl.

“Oh, it’s beautiful. Have you ever seen such a beautiful statue?”

“ ... ”

The paladins stopped the moment they saw Tori.

One of the two virtues of a knight was their bravery, but seeing such a powerful enemy had them trembling in fear. In an army, the invisible factor known as morale was very important. A lower morale caused the attack power to drop.

“I have seen a more beautiful statue.”

Weed decided to go with the momentum.

“You have seen a more beautiful statue than this?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

Tori got up as if he wanted to go there immediately.

“In Baran Village at the southern part of the Rosenheim Kingdom.”

“That is not a palace or the city of a church. I have never even heard the name of that town. Why should I believe that there is a beautiful statue in such a place?”

“It’s up to you to believe it. It was a statue that I made. However this is not even close to the Ice Beauty statue that I made.”

Tori was overwhelmed as he smiled.

“What is your profession?”

“Sculptor.”

“An artist! Making your life enriching! Being praised in abundance! Eating and filling your stomach so that you can enjoy life! That is why I hate the Church of Freya. Humans are mistaken. They have lived thinking that abundance is good. Taking what belongs to another. Only that is beautiful is eternal. Humans that choose to sacrifice beauty cannot enjoy art. It takes the nobility of the night, the vampires, to appreciate art!”

Tori got off of his chair and revealed his true form. Long nails grew from his hands and fangs protruded from his mouth like a snake. He was changing his form to start the battle.

“I want to see what you look like drenched in blood! This is what it means to be a vampire. I hereby welcome you to my castle humans.”

“Paladins forward, concentrate on defense!”

Under the protection of magic and blessings, the paladins urgently made a layered formation.

“Kyaahah!”

Tori gazed with a mean look at the line of paladins in front of him.

Jjeojeojeok!

From the ankle upwards, they began to petrify. Tori had used a curse to turn his enemies into stone. This was the skill that had turned the all 300 paladins and 100 priests into statues before.

“Alveron!”

Weed called Alveron to use the dispel magic he had memorized. In the meantime, a full-fledged battle went underway. Tori struck the paladins like lightning. Wielding his nails like knives, every now and then paladin blood would splatter. Priests continued healing as they had in every battle until now.

‘We’re going to win!’

Weed’s eyes shone.

A level 400 monster had caused him a lot of worry. Thankfully the paladins were excellent at blocking attacks. Even the little damage they did take did not matter that much because of the priests healing. No matter how much damage was done, the priests were able to quickly restore it. Taking away the enemy’s strength, it was a fighting cycle by a large number of enemies.

Tori's health and mana continued to drop!

But there was an unseen variable!

“Tornado Blade!”

Tori entered the fray playfully. Then a tremendous storm swept up the paladins. Those in the path of the tornado had their health reduced by nearly a third.

“Healing Hand!”

“Heal!”

“Recover!”

The priests continued to heal. The radiant white light began to heal the group, but Tori used his skill again.

“Tornado Blade!”

With that attack about 20 paladins burst into gray flames.

Eternal rest. That was the fate of the slain.

Tori moved relentlessly. His health and mana were colossal. Tori's long nails cut down like knives.

“Aaaah!”

“Goddess Freya!”

Once again, a bunch of paladins turned into gray flames. However, Tori’s power gradually fell, just as Weed had planned. But Tori suddenly rushed near a paladin and bit down to suck his blood.

“Keuah!”

The paladin’s complexion was rapidly disappearing. Tori had recovered his mana that he had used. His health and wounds were restored and his power was restored.

“Behold my attack, you savage sheep!”

Tori had begun to fight at his maximum health and mana. Whenever his health and mana fell, he used his unique vampire skill to shower them with a wide area magic. The paladins tried to avoid it, but they could not escape. Tori moved with tremendous speed and caught the paladins.

‘The paladins that I spent all my time training!

Weed was tearing up at the scene. The paladins he had raised by feeding, repairing their equipment, and to whom he had given up

his hunting grounds were helpless in front of Tori. To make matters worse, the paladins that fell to the vampire were slowly rising from the ground.

The faithful members of the church were now slaves to the vampire lord.

A vampire paladin!

Even without holy powers, their sword skills were still intact. Tori was increasing the number of slaves.

“Keoheoheong!”

The paladins began to yell out in fatigue. This was not confusion magic but rather Tori’s plan.

“Healing Hand!”

“Heal!”

Fortunately, the priests were still alive. However, it remained unchanged that the vampires could fight endlessly while his own men couldn’t. This was the tactic that Tori had used to exhaust and wipeout the first group of paladins and priests.

“Keuhahahahah!”

These were optimal conditions for Tori. His wickedness and twisted beauty could be distinctly felt. But Weed still had means to reverse the situation.

“If this is how it’s going to be then we can’t help it! Priests, stop the treatment of friendly units and attack him.”

Since that moment the situation was reversed. Using the high vitality of the paladins to stop Tori, the priests casted their healing spells on the vampire, which were deadly to any vampire! Since the priests concentrated their attacks on Tori, the paladins had to use their own healing spells to recover their health.

“Kueahah!” Tori screamed.

Tori killed a few more paladins, but his health gradually fell. He was falling under the continuous attacks of the priests. With low health, Tori began looking for food. At that moment, Tori caught a paladin and used his vampire skills. Weed was looking for a loophole. No matter how powerful, every monster had a weakness. Not to mention that the vampires had the biggest weakness. Their completely unprotected bodies.

“Sculpting Blade!”

Weed’s sword was covered in a clear blue light.

Color Spectrum!

Most of the times, a sword skill had a red or black hue. However, as an engraver, Weed's intermediate skill gave him a blurred blue light.

“Sword Kaiser!”

Weed's sword gathered energy from his body. Then he flew forward and pierced the paladin and Tori together.

He used the paladin to get to the vampire!

Since he didn't see Weed behind the paladin, his sword penetrated straight into the vampire's heart.

Ting

A fatal blow has been struck!

Tori's vampire abilities have been removed

The vampire's weakness was the heart! Since he had stabbed the heart with the sword like a stake in the heart. Agatha's holy attribute gave twice the damage to the undead. Tori suffered a

grievously fatal blow.

Sword Kaiser was the last technique from the Imperial Formless Sword set. It was the most mana and stamina draining skill Weed could use! However, the total damage from collecting all of Weed's mana into a single attack was enormous. Tori had become unsteady from the huge amount of damage that was dealt to him, but as a high level monster, he did not die.

“Fucker....”

Throwing aside the dead paladin, he caught Weed with both of his hands.

“I'll eat you instead. Kueahak!” He roared as Tori opened his mouth.

At the moment the shiny sharpened fangs drew closer to the nape of his neck. Weed stared at him and opened his mouth to let out his breath.

“Woowaak! The rotten smell of garlic!”

“So I heard you like art, is that right?”

“I'm going to kill you!”

Tori chased as Weed immediately turned and ran. He enjoyed the

feeling of fighting significantly stronger monsters. However, the enemy was way too strong to fight one on one. His mana was depleted so he couldn't even use the Sculpting Blade skill. Compared to Tori, whose damage was cut by half, a simple attack was very risky for Weed.

“Heal me! Paladins kill him!”

Weed was under the constant treatment of Alveron as he fled. While running away, his stamina and health was being restored. Tori was constantly being attacked by the priests and was slowly dying. As expected of a level 400 monster, he was able to get past and kill a few paladins. But under the heavily concentrated magic he fell to the ground and died.

The paladins that had been turned into vampires by Tori stopped moving. When Tori had died, the magic that was controlling their spirit was released. None of the priests had died in the battle, but 178 paladins, more than half of them, had lost their lives.

‘It’s a pity.’ Weed thought sadly.

Weed had depleted his mana and was disappointed. He had not dealt the final blow to Tori with his own hands. With the vast experience of a level 400 monster, he would have gotten at least 4-5 levels.

As Tori died, he dropped a crown and a necklace. Weed picked up the two items. The Crown of Fargo was heavy.

Ting

Item: The Church of Freya’s Treasure: Crown of Fargo has been recovered!

“Identify”

Item: The Crown of Fargo:

Durability: 2000/2000

One of the three sacred treasures of the Goddess Freya.

The crown is a symbol of authority. It gives the firm belief to rule over others. It bestows the power to rule over the church’s army. With the Crown of Fargo, the army will be absolutely loyal.

Restriction:

A job related to the Clerical class that is recognized by the Church of Freya.

Leadership 800

Faith 1200

Equipped:

Raises the soldiers' moral.

Soldiers do not surrender to the enemy.

+150 Strength

+150 Agility

+150 Stamina

+50 All other stats

+500 Fame

It was indeed a Holy Treasure of the Church of Freya. Weed admired it and then a message window appeared.

Ting

For observing a beautiful object, art has increased!

Art has risen by 20 point (+20 ART)

The Crown of Fargo was adorned with glittering jewels. It was made with exquisite craftsmanship and elegance. The light that shone from the jewels had unparalleled beauty. That was the feeling being transmitted to Weed.

“And now the necklace...”

“Identify!”

Item: Black Necklace of Life:

Durability: 50/50

It was crafted from ancient black magic items and imbued with an unknown power. The Undead Lord Barkhan made this item for

his subordinates.

Restriction:

Unknown

Equipped:

Unknown

“Whoa!” Weed exclaimed.

If his hunch was right, this item was able to summon Tori out to fight. But like the Death Knight Van Hawk, he needed to persuade him first.

‘Better keep it stored for now.’

Weed crammed the Black Necklace of Life into a corner of his bag. Since Tori died, the black castle began to change. Beams of light leaked in through the blocked windows. The deteriorated walls and floor were brightened up by the light, changing the atmosphere. It was as if the days of past splendor were returning.

“The divine light removes the power of restraint that binds and

distorts freedom.”

The statue of the village girl finally returned to normal. The villagers of Morata came to give their thanks.

“Thank you, thank you! Now we will be able to live in peace.”

Ting

Quest Completed: The Curse on the Province of Morata:

All of the petrified residents of the Morata village have been freed, and although it will still be tough for them, do not give up hope; for the textile business in the Morata Province will begin reconstruction!

Fame has risen by 900 points (+900 FAME)

Your friendship with Morata residents has reached 25 points

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

You have leveled up!

Completing A Rank B difficulty quest, caused him to go up a staggering 8 levels!

Then the villagers laid out something wrapped in cloth. “Here, in absence of a reward, please take these poultry gifts!”

Ting

You have received:

Item: 100 pieces of Sovereign Prismatic Cloth

Item: 200 pieces of Premium Deer Leather

For tailoring, Prismatic Cloth was a Tier 1 material in making clothes. The Cloth was lustrous with light and colours. The leather was a great material for buckskin clothing.

“What to do with these things? I’ll just keep them for now and see what I can do with them later...”

Weed neatly stacked the bolts of Prismatic Cloth on top of each other into his backpack.

The quest in Morata had been completed. When Weed went to the teleport gate, the Paladins said.

“Please convey the High Priest this message. The town is powerless to stop the monsters. We have decided to stay here to keep order in this town. We will stay here and keep Barkhan’s army of darkness away.”

The paladins and priests remained behind. Weed and Alveron went back to the teleport gate and the priests from the church gathered in the cave.

“Savior, an oracle has divined that you have safely resolved the

quest. The High Priest is waiting. Please enter the portal.”

“Yes.”

Weed and Alveron went onto the teleport gate. With a dazzling light, they soon disappeared.

Chapter 11: Emergence Of Poor Broadcasting

Lee Hyun accessed the item trading site to get information about some of the items he had.

“This should earn me a decent amount of income...”

He had spent more than 3 months in the Morata Province. He had to invest that kind of time because of the difficulty of the quest.

He had acquired a lot of vampire loot: one vampire cape, two boots, and 4 gloves. In addition to his drops, he had gathered various items while hunting out in the field.

However, for 3 months worth of hunting, it was lower than he had expected. Unlike when he was hunting in Laviyas where he could monopolize the items, he had to distribute the items evenly amongst the paladins in battle.

Even with the help of Alveron, in order to make the chances of the quest succeeding as high as possible he had depleted all of the remaining heavenly fruit and Avian eggs that he had.

He hoped to earn at least 6 million won. If he managed to sell the items, 6 million won would be a lot of money. However, to get a college degree, it would only last about three months.

‘That means I have to earn 2 million won a month. However, in six months I have only managed to earn 3 million won.’

Hyun Lee, his sister, and his grandmother. For a family of three, they had a fixed income of 200 thousand won. Everything that was left over went into saving for the degree. In one year, his sister was going to enter a university. In a single year, a freshman spends more than 10 million won and it increases each year.

With all these in mind, when his sister goes to college she will need a monthly minimum of 3.5 million won.

The reason for this was so that she could socialize with others, make friends, learn various skills, and spend time roaming with others.

Royal Road! It already dominated the item trading site.

Therefore, users earned a lot of money from the game. Users were especially greedy. They formed a guild in the capital or a castle and received exclusive hunting grounds. Lee Hyun was left trying to compete with them.

‘I don’t care whatever others do. I only want my share. With time the items will sell.’

Lee Hyun had great confidence for this part.

A Triple Diamond Rating.

Thanks to it, the items that Lee Hyun posted on the trading site will have a prominently displayed position until it was sold.

“Okay.”

Lee Hyun had a moment of satisfaction.

Then the door rattled as his sister came in.

“Oppa, it’s time to study.”

“...”

His GED test was less than 1 month away.

Lee Hyun spent 2 hours a day with his sister studying in order to pass the exam.

Beep!

The phone rang in the middle of studying.

Lee Hyun thought that maybe it was the item trading site contacting him and picked up the phone.

-Hello. This is CTS Media.

The cheerful and feminine voice of Nahee Yoon.

Lee Hyun had heard it once when he had already sold his account.

“What’s going on? Did you purchase my items again?”

*

Within CTS Media was a department that was currently holding an important meeting.

“Our shares in the broadcasting market are increasingly falling. Our sector has less than 7% ratings for broadcasting the game.”

“Is it that too many people are not interested in broadcasts about the game? Too many game companies have turned away from the game approach and trying using a lot of advertising. We have been too focused on the commercial approach while other companies are increasing their revenue and viewership by focusing on the game itself.”

“There could be another reason, however, we probably still require a major program like the other broadcasters is also true, so we should have a program about the most popular game Royal

Road, right?”

More than 90% of gamers in Korea played the game now.

Royal Road, was the VRMMORPG that has caught the attention of the people on a worldwide basis.

(P/R: VRMMORPG: Virtual Reality Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game)

Generally it has become part of the regular news, but there could be time to make a separate program about the game.

In recent years, even office workers were able to travel abroad on vacation at home without having to go anywhere by using Royal Road, except, they become a little bit hooked and it's turning into a bit of social problem.

“Viewership for programs associated with Royal Road is doing well overall. However, our overall viewership has declined. It says that viewers have stopped following our programs.”

“What is the specific cause? I have gotten all sorts of celebrities and comedians to come onto the show as commentators for the game.”

The directors of each department were very embarrassed.

Famous celebrities in Korea. They had indeed hired high cost A-class celebrities.

Why these programs appeared to continually progress with lower and lower viewership as they were, was difficult to understand.

“Why don’t you bring in the more well-known entertainers?”

“You mean hire the even more expensive ones? I did that for a little bit, but every time I do the viewership drops deceptively.”

“The celebrities avoid doing the broadcasts now too.”

Each of the directors talked for a very long time but the answer did not come.

Back in the day, CTS Media was said to be the most popular broadcasting station. It was the first broadcasting station that brought out popular celebrities. It didn’t take long for the ratings to rise after celebrities started appearing on the show. With the appearance of the celebrities, viewership increased from low to normal.

That was why they did not discard the celebrity card. But now it was the main topic after the repeated drops in the ratings.

Celebrities in a game. It became cliché. Cute celebrities showing pitiful expressions from catching a rabbit. They also didn’t know the rules of the game or how to get a basic quest from an NPC, were

constantly lost in the various kingdoms within the game and didn't know which cities they were in.

Most viewers found watching celebrities hunting in a VRMMORPG almost hilarious.

The broadcasters had gotten a lot of good equipment and items for hunting. They wanted to find a good party that would increase the popularity of their show. Unfortunately, this annoyed the viewers.

Royal Road had meaning in the name itself.

Because anyone was capable of becoming Emperor, it was their ambitious to up the challenge and become the Emperor!

Users took risks in this dream. Each with a different way, even if the purpose itself was the same. It was a happy life full of challenges and adventure!

Even since Royal Road was released, suicide rates dropped substantially across the board.

“The most fundamental problem comes first; it is necessary to increase our incorporation of Royal Road a bit.”

Everyone sympathized with the Director of Management.

“Of course.”

“We should have done that sooner.”

“We should get rid of all future plans for celebrities playing the game.”

“Viewership may diminish temporarily but sometimes you need to try.”

“Welcome.”

The Planning Department welcomed the Ministry of Finance with open arms.

“A decisive measure to boost viewership amongst our broadcasters...we need to organize a special program.”

“A special program?”

“So far, viewers have relied on the news to get informed about the game. However there is a limit for each city or kingdom. Nothing like a boring newscast in front of a desk. Let us introduce a way to get closer to the users.”

“Closer you say...”

“Let’s select 8 people in total and have them tell their stories. They should have videos stored inside of their capsules.”

“Yes they do.”

Capsules made by Unicorn for enjoying virtual reality games.

Each boasted various modern devices. One of them recorded media as their users played. As it said within the instructions, inside was a stored media recording device that can play videos.

“We can broadcast their stories and they can give information about the secrets of Royal Road and introduce new ideas. It’s fun for people to find out other people’s stories isn’t it?”

“The story of how it all started for a user.”

From there CTS Media launched a broadcast, selecting users for it. They primarily targeted the higher level and famous users from Royal Road.

Viewers will follow the program about how the strongest users became the way they did, as well as the quests they did and the secrets they had. Of course, they won’t disclose all the secrets but, even with a little, users will come flocking uncontrollably.

It included martial arts as well as how to get rich, but they sought out the desire of the user base for the premiere recruits.

Users of Royal Road, the higher levels and the fanatics all had secrets of their own. These people led guilds and made colonies. They governed the affairs of the city in an influential kingdom and substantially increased the number of people in the cities through planning, these people were often selected.

In addition one more person, Thor the blacksmith.

It was pointed out a few times for the broadcast. The craftsman profession was poorly represented so a class that increased the defense of equipment was selected.

And then the last person.

*

-Is this Lee Hyun?

“Yes.”

-Hi. It's been a long time since we talked. I am the secretary of the President of CTS Media, Nahee Yoon.

“Yes, it's been too long.”

-I thank you on behalf of the company for having sold us your account. CTS Media used your account to hunt monsters in each

region of the map in the Continent of Magic and it was aired as a special program, remember?

CTS Media.

He immediately recognized the company. As he had sold his account to them for a whooping 3.09 billion won, a huge amount of money that he could never make in years.. Thanks to them, he was able to clear his debts and start a new life.

“So it’s this...”

He had put the items on the auction site and was waiting. Now he had been waiting for a response.

-Just calling to say hi, to see if you remember me.

His response was blunt.

“I don’t remember.”

-Ah...so have you not heard?

“I’m a little busy.”

Lee Hyun’s words were true.

Back then, and even now, he had never spent any time in leisure because he had to prepare for his future plans for Royal Road. He did not have the kind of time to be watching a game broadcast.

-Yes. I understand. Nahee Yoon was silent for a long time. Then she asked a brief question.

-Actually, this time our company is planning a program and wants to see if we can invite Lee Hyun. So I'd like to ask you a question. Are you currently playing Royal Road?

“Yes.”

CTS Media was planning several different kinds of measures.

How the users that play Royal Road within the country and abroad was one of them. But it did not make sense to exclude celebrities. Celebrities appearing in reality for signings would attract enthusiasts. However, it would do nothing to pull a person that was too famous into the game.

Strong villains.

People in positions of power.

High level players.

There would be no problem if they could fill the eight positions

with those. However, it would be interesting to come up with one unknown person that they did not know the class or level of in the game.

It would attract clumsy viewers.

A protagonist whose actions would cause trepidation.

These requirements, seeing as they could not create a fictional character, put the recruitment into hiatus. They had to consider several people.

Then they remembered a program in the past that was associated with the Continent of Magic.

Weed.

The game character with the highest stats in the game.

The same person who was wrapped in a veil of mystery and legend unlike any other. The person who enjoyed fighting monsters, whom nothing could stand up to his crushing force.

Everyone that knew Continent of Magic knew of Weed.

Then if he was in Royal Road. The tale of a legend in another game.

Many users had their expectations.

So this was what they wanted to try.

“This is the person we need!”

More than one year had passed.

Just like how fish cannot leave water, they thought that Lee Hyun would be in Royal Road.

-Can I ask what level you are in Royal Road?

Nahee Yoon asked her question in a very cautious tone. Asking unfamiliar people about items or levels was the same as asking for information.

“219.” He replied

-219? That-that’s great!

But Nahee Yoon was slightly disappointed. The man was the one who had reigned supreme in the Continent of Magic. It was little more than a year now, so level 219 was lower than expected. It was a pretty high level, but there were quite the number of people around that level.

But she did not know that Lee Hyun had spent one year preparing for Royal Road, but the time he played was not very long. Nahee Yoon then explained the situation to Lee Hyun.

-Lee Hyun, there is a newly organized program in which we need your assistance.

“You want me to go on television?”

Nahee Yoon replied to Hyun Lee’s questions.

-No, we’re not. We want to make a story about how you have played the game until now. Send it to us and we will broadcast it. Of course it will undergo inspection.

“So you want footage of my game play and I’ll receive money?”

-Send us only a brief portion. What quests you did, where and how you raised your level. As well as what kind of secrets you used to help you level up.

“How much will I get for it?”

-I think 500 thousand won per episode. It gets broadcast twice a week. It may be small, but after it gets aired 20 times, depending on the ratings, you can get rehired.

It was not a bad deal. Lee Hyun accepted the offer since it would

allow money to come in.

CTS Media Counsel to his house to came to sign a formal contract. Lee Hyun meticulously studied the contract to confirm that there were no unfavorable provisions. Even if the ratings fall, the broadcast gets interrupted, or if they change the show, Lee Hyun will still get 20 payments. Lee Hyun spent the entire night wondering what to do.

“What should I put!”

The contract needed to be handed over with the manuscript for the first part. But how would he start? He was blocked at the very first sentence. He seemed to understand a little bit about the feelings authors have when writing.

‘Writing is not the same as writing posts. I’m not a real writer and I just can’t send any story. In fact, especially if it’s defective.’

After that, Lee Hyun just instantly wrote the manuscript.

The Production Department of CTS Media received the manuscript of the first week and freaked out.

Others spent a lot of hard effort to write their manuscripts. Though they were gamers and not writers, they tended to see useless chatter with friends and talking to be unsuitable narration and would not be inserted, so many of the manuscripts were dropped.

However, this was the alternative and was too plain.

Even for a brief overview, it was too much.

Day 1:

Rosenheim Kingdom, started at the Citadel of Serabourg.

Went to the training center all day to beat the scarecrow.

Day 2:

Beat the scarecrow all day.

Day 3:

Beat the scarecrow all day

Day 4:

Beat the scarecrow all day.

All seven days for the week was just that.

“Is somebody messing with us or what!”

The manager of the Production Department was hysterical. It was hard not to be upset.

“He’s going to explode.”

“This time he might seriously do it.”

The staff shivered in fear. The last time he had exploded, he had broken a few cameras once.

From a safe distance away he said. “Maybe if we play the video we can be lucky. Many of them are lousy writers. Let me take a look at the video. I may want to plan a broadcast based on it.”

The video broadcast team began to finish the manuscripts. The

video of Weed began to play on their monitor and everyone was dumbstruck at what they saw.

[The 8 Heroes]

CTS Media began to broadcast the program. Many stories in Royal Road were currently unknown. The stronger and famous users have all had interviews but it was never known what they did to become strong. Due to the fact that the first broadcast showed the growth process of users, it received huge ratings.

By being a leader in Royal Road, they became famous.

They were interested in becoming more famous.

The 7 people formed a guild or went with friends to do hard quests in the first episode. And then there was one person that was beating a scarecrow to death. At the end of the first episode, the Internet was in a huge uproar.

-
- What was with the first broadcast?
 - Do they think that the viewers are a joke? Get it together.
 - I'm spending my paycheck on something like this...Tch."

Viewers began to bring up this point on the broadcasting board.

Once, twice, three times.

The users on the internet disagreed on what a master gamer should do. But every week, as the story progressed he was the only person that kept doing the same thing, hitting the scarecrow ten thousand times. Viewers began to have strange expectations of the scarecrow beater, wondering what he was going to do. They waited in anticipation for what was going to happen next. But after the scarecrow beater continued on for four times, it disappeared from the show.

The broadcasters had appeared and had decided to suspended it.

Book 04: Dungeon Hunting

Chapter 1: Plains Of Despair

“That person is strange. Why is he jumping around like that?”

“It looks like he’s insane.”

“Come on, let’s go.”

This figure was avoided and feared by the people of Somren Liberty City. That was because he looked like the sort of person who would cause you trouble if you got close to him.

He was actually Weed. Weed was jumping up and down in fury.

“Aaargh!”

He even let out a scream. At his mad behavior, everyone distanced themselves from his suffering. Hence, it was lucky that this was near the temple of the Church of Freya.

If he acted like this in the middle of the street, someone would have taken a video and it would have ended up, inevitably, on a website.

“Uwaaah!” At the end, Weed even burst into tears!

‘I threw away the opportunity for a real jackpot!’

He had left the Morata region through the teleport gate and arrived at Somren Liberty City. Right at the moment he emerged from the gate, a thought flashed through his head.

‘I won’t be able to use the effects of the Bingryong statue or the Ice Beauty statue any longer. That’s a pity.’

They were sculptures that had taken him over a month to make. The Bingryong statue’s incredible size, its overwhelming majesty, and its various options as well, were really amazing.

Thanks to the options attached to the sculpture, his hunting had truly sped up by more than half as much.

‘So why the hell didn’t I bring it with me?!’

The Bingryong statue was too large to bring. However, he should have somehow brought the Ice Beauty statue with him.

If he tried to sell the Ice Beauty statue that increased the recovery speed of both health and mana, people would have lined up to buy it.

As the material was ice, it would melt with the passage of time, but if magic with ice preservation properties were used, the appearance of the sculpture could be maintained.

As the options attached to the sculpture could be stacked with the effects from bracelets or rings, even the effects from other items could be stacked.

Nobody would be able to guess how much money he could have received if that Ice Beauty statue had been sold.

‘Sob... It’s because I’m too much of a nice, naive, and kind person that such a tragedy had to occur.’

Though he continued to regret it while jumping up and down in fury, it was already too late.

A nice and pleasant person. Weed saw that as being no different to a fool.

Someone who was shamelessly devious, despicable, and dishonorable, but rich. Wouldn’t this kind of life be what you should truly aim for?

‘It’s not too late. From now on, you have to be tougher, Weed. Though it’s unfair that we had to become a sculptor, if we ignore all the advantages of being a sculptor, we won’t survive.’

Weed reaffirmed his life’s goal.

He had returned to the church of Freya together with Alveron and all the priests, who up until now had been watching Weed’s crazy behavior.

Some were frowning and others had frightened expressions. Like this, weren't they even slowly edging away? So, even the NPCs were avoiding Weed.

“Ahem.”

Weed straightened his clothes and returned to his usual appearance of an adventurer out to punish evil and on a righteous mission.

“Then let's go and meet the High Priest.”

Right afterwards, Weed headed to the High Priest along with the other priests. The High Priest had been waiting for his visit.

This time he didn't need to make an offering like he had last time, and he was able to meet the High Priest directly. Weed was pleased by this slight effect.

Though the money he had been earning increased, if he didn't manage the money that he spent, he would never become a wealthy person. Weed carried in his arms a crown embedded with white jewels.

“Here is Fargo's crown that I have found and retrieved.”

“Ooh! I am truly grateful. Returning both Helian's goblet and

Fargo's crown to us like this, you are our church's savior."

The quest to recover Fargo's crown was complete.

The last relic lost by the church of Freya, Fargo's crown, had been with the vampires of the Morata region...

The True-blood Vampire clan, led by the Vampire Lord Torido.

While waiting for the return of the Immortal Legion led by the Dark Mage Barkhan Demoph, they had arrived in the Morata Region and taken control.

For Barkhan, who tainted the continent with his evil, the elimination of the True Blood Vampire clan would be a painful blow.

As Fargo's crown was a symbol of divine authority and majesty, it was an item that had to be retrieved for the church's prestige.

- Your fame has risen by 1,200.

- Your friendship with the Church of Freya has reached 31.

- The Church of Freya's publicity has increased by 2,200. The

church's publicity can be checked in the religion status window.

- The Church of Freya's publicity: 4,612
 - The publicity of religious organizations increases by combating evil or completing relevant quests.
 - Your level has risen.
 - Your level has risen.
 - Your level has risen.
 - Your level has risen.
 - Your level has risen.....
-

As compensation for resolving a B-class difficulty quest, his level rose 9 times.

‘This is pretty good service.’

At Weed's current level, to raise his levels all in one go like this by defeating a monster would be difficult.

However, to find Fargo's Crown he had to go through months of hardship, so this result hadn't been easy to obtain.

The High Priest then gave him 30 potions filled with white and red liquids.

"This is the gift that our church is bestowing upon you. It is holy water and the finest health regeneration potions."

"Why all of this..."

"Though it's not much, please accept it. They could be helpful if you use them in an emergency."

"Thank you very much."

Weed tucked away the potions. As the price of potions was too expensive, up until now Weed had never purchased them.

If you weren't someone working as a pirate or a bandit like the Dwichigi quartet, it was fairly difficult to make use of potions.

It was because if your level rose and your health and vitality increased, you would need to purchase a more expensive potion of greater performance to match the increase.

So, there were only a few people who hunted while using

potions. But if you did have potions with you, they could truly become a great help during emergency situations. For that reason, everyone packed a few potions on them.

“Also, here is the equipment awarded to heroes.”

Including Agatha’s sword, Weed received once more the same set of the items that he had been given for rescuing Helian’s goblet.

‘These must be the prizes given when lost relics are returned. This will make me some money.’

“Also, this is an item that was in our church’s treasure vault. As there was no one who could use it, it had only been gathering dust. Fortunately, as your profession is a sculptor, it would be good if you take this.”

-You have found an unknown leather belt.

When you acquire an unknown item, the first task that had to be done was item identification.

Regardless of whether the item is cursed or already owned by someone, if the performance is poor, the item wouldn’t be useful

in any way.

“Identify.”

Deykram’s red Wyvern leather belt:

Durability: 60/60.

Defense: 22.

Born from the free sky, this belt is made of Wyvern’s leather. Red Wyverns are creatures so extremely rare that their very existence is doubted.

Wearing a belt made of red wyvern’s leather will make you the subject of adventurers’ attentions.

It’s stretchy, so it doesn’t tear easily and fits well. Though its heavy, it can be threaded through trousers and worn tightly around the waist, and it seems able to hold sculpting tools.

The sculpting master Deykram has carved directly into the central section of the belt an engraving of a Wyvern head.

Restrictions: Level 150

Limited to the Sculptor Profession

Options:

Charm +15.

Strength +10.

Agility +30.

Sculpting Skill +7%.

Making sculptures while wearing the belt allows you to acquire an additional 5 fame.

Weed was silent for a moment.

He had expected to receive a special item from resolving a B-grade difficulty quest but he had received Deykram's belt.

Obviously, the item's performance wasn't that good. For an item of this type that raised defense and stats, it wasn't as if you couldn't find any others.

However, it was none other than Deykram's belt. One of the 5 sculpting masters who had ever lived on the continent, Deykram! His belt had now fallen into Weed's hands.

‘I've just earned 900 thousand Won.’

Deykram's equipment set.

His helmet and sculpting tools had once appeared on an auction site. Their options that improved sculpting skills were useless to regular people.

As the sculpting profession was already becoming extinct, it normally wouldn't have been traded, but the helmet had sold for 800,000 Won, and the sculpting tools had sold for 1,100,000 Won.

They had been bought by people who collected rare items.

The items he had found and returned to the High Priest, first Helian's goblet and even Fargo's crown, were truly rare beyond imagination.

“We, the church, want to show our gratitude that we owe a lifetime of heartfelt thanks to you, hero. Wherever you are, you have the goddess Freya's blessing. If you are injured or cursed, come and find us at any time. We will treat you free of charge. Also, I will act to make this church's teleportation gates available to you at any time.”

“Thank you very much.”

The High Priest let out a great sigh. His demeanor seemed as if he was seriously troubled.

“The church’s three relics have finally returned. With the recovery of our full authority, might, and divine power, our paladins and priests will now be able to exert their full, original strength. The Immortal Legion led by Barkhan Demoph is crouching down in the barren northern plains and increasing their forces, but according to the last message sent by the paladins who went to reconnoitre, they have no need for the monsters they have recruited because they are already so powerful.”

The Immortal Legion led by Barkhan Demoph was frightening because each one of them was a named undead.

Those who died in battle and weren’t buried by the enemy were revived as followers. There were paladins who displayed dark magical powers, and priests who used the blessings of demons.

Whenever the Immortal Legion fought, their forces increased.

“Tidings have been heard that Barkhan Demoph has resurrected, and at the same time, hastened movements from the demon worshiping necromancers have been observed. These necromancers, who research magic with fresh blood and in hatred, can be said to be seeds of evil. I have been told that they are preparing something in the Plains of Despair.”

Ding!

The exiles living in the Plains of Despair.

The necromancers led by Barkhan Demoph believe in the demon Beelzebub.

It is unknown as to why the necromancers, who obstinately research the principles of mana, built a temple for the worship of Beelzebub.

Dark elves and those exiles who were cast out from each kingdom during the age of chaos live in the Plains of Despair.

Some of the necromancers who were with the temple have left for the Plains of Despair. Find and eliminate them. If you go to the temple of Rosenheim kingdom, you can obtain information on them and support troops.

Difficulty: B

Rewards: Unknown

Quest Restrictions:

Failure will lower the Church of Freya's publicity to 0.

Fame -3,000.

Weed felt as if he would let out a sigh. It was B-grade difficulty this time as well.

‘Still, isn’t it a good thing that there’s no time limit?’

The Plains of Despair was an area a long way to the northeast of Rosenheim kingdom. Located on the border between Bertran Kingdom and Rosenheim Kingdom, it was an area where dangerous monsters spawned like crazy.

However, this was only the start of the Plains of Despair.

On a map that had been found at somewhere and at some time that had been called ‘Map of the Versailles Continent’, the Plains of Despair was drawn much larger than even Aidern Kingdom, the continent’s greatest power.

“Those necromancers who oppose divine providence will be eliminated.”

- You have received a quest.

“Thank you, Hero!”

The high priest’s face was filled with a great happiness. Once the story had finished, the High Priest would no longer respond to Weed. Weed slowly exited the church.

After training in the nearby villages, Mapan was in the middle of returning to Somren Liberty City. In his ear, he heard the voice of someone he hadn’t been able to reach for a long time.

- Mr. Mapan.

- Yes? Oh, Mr. Weed! I knew you would definitely die. Where are you now?

- The work went well. Come to the front of the church of Freya.

- Yes, I’ll run over now.

Mapan really ran like the wind. So quickly that it didn't even take him 10 minutes. It was the return of Weed who had left after receiving a B-grade difficulty quest!

He arrived at the place after leaving straight from the market without even packing his goods. Mapan was also accompanied by a beautiful woman.

Of course, Mapan wanted to ask about Weed's activities, but thinking that it wouldn't be polite, he first introduced his colleagues.

"Here is Mr. Weed. And here is Miss. Hwa Ryeong."

"Nice to meet you. I am called Weed."

"Good day. I have heard a lot about you."

During the time that Mapan had met her and they had traveled together, her class had been a great help.

"Mr. Weed, don't be alarmed, but the occupation of Miss. Hwa Ryeong here is that of a dancer."

"Dancer?"

Hwa Ryeong spoke with a cheerful laugh.

“You can look at it as a class along the same lines as a bard. With dancing instead of music, we can buff the abilities of our allies and take on our enemies.”

“So, it’s like that. It must be hard on you.”

“Not at all! It’s so fun. I enjoy dancing as well.”

Hwa Ryeong’s specialty was in confusing enemies. When she began to dance, monsters lost their fighting spirit and fell into a daze. You could even look at it as one of the hidden classes.

She could even confuse monsters much stronger than her own level of 175, but in such cases the mana consumption increased.

It was the same when she attempted to confuse a large amount of monsters in one go. Also, if she attacked them while dancing, the monsters would snap out of it.

She could only wield a single stiletto in one hand, and her attack and defense were on the meager side, so it was impossible for her to hunt alone. It had its strong points, but on the other hand, the class also had serious disadvantages.

In any case, until now, whenever monsters had been encountered, Hwa Ryeong had confused them while Mapan drove their wagon as they quickly made their escape.

‘A sculptor, a merchant, and a dancer... This just gets better and

better.'

A legend was passed down through Royal Road! It was about those with production classes and the other unusual classes.

The classes that people shunned!

By sticking together and combining their strong points, they were able to maximize their individual abilities and the strongest party was born.

It was a legend of how they could catch defeat monsters, and that before the party was disbanded, it had been able to show the optimal usage of their skills.

Of course, as it was first during Royal Road's initial phase, the origin of the legend was unknown.

'It must just be groundless rumors.'

Most of hunting consisted mainly of using the combat system. It is easy to find a person and create a group. With these, the speed at which monsters are hunted greatly increases.

But for those who are weak and useless in combat, their presence in battle is one that needs to be taken care of. There is no particular reason for them to join. So they aren't even invited in the first place.

“Gasp!”

Mapan suddenly took a deep breath. He then crept closer to Weed and whispered to him.

“Since I suffered through Mr. Weed’s Lion’s Roar, I truly felt that I could endure and get used to any other person’s appearance in battle.”

(Not sure how clear this is, might use tweaking of the phrasing. Basically he’s saying that after how strange Weed was in shouting at his enemies, no one else would even be able to surprise him, but he can’t keep his eyes off Hwa Ryeong’s dancing)

“And so?”

“Do you know what type of dance Mrs. Hwa Ryeong does for the monsters?”

“What is it?”

“The Bubi bubi.....” (jiggle it jiggle it)

“Gulp.”

This dancer, if she met an Orc or an Ogre, would actually approach them closely and dance the Bubi bubi! Hwa Ryeong’s

cheeks were dyed with a peach color.

“I once used to frequently go to night clubs... now I like dancing so much that I can’t stop.”

“....”

“Oh yeah!”

There was something that Mapan really wanted to ask.

“But just where have you returned from after the past three months? Did you succeed in the quest?”

Weed laughed merrily.

“You’ll know soon enough.”

“Huh?”



It first started in Somren Liberty City.

- You, do you know about the adventurer named Weed? This time he has completed a great deed. Fargo’s crown! The crown that was lost by the Church of Freya has now been found and returned.

- The True-blood Vampire Clan is said to be an important force of the dark mage Barkhan. The brave man named Weed, famous for his devotion and artistry, is said to have defeated them.

- You know about the famous Weed too, right?

In concert, all the NPCs in markets, coach-houses, and those staying in inns or mercenary guilds, began to tell stories about Weed. After some time, the NPCs in the United Kingdom of Briton began telling stories as well.

- Something big has turned up in Somren Liberty City, it's said that the adventurer named Weed has completed a great request of the Church of Freya.

- The person named Weed....

- Weed has...

Then to Rosenheim Kingdom!

- Do you know of Weed who comes from our kingdom? What, you don't know? If that's so, listen closely.

It was not uncommon for even the NPCs from the Thor, Harpan, and Pallmore kingdoms to tell stories about Weed.

After getting out of his capsule, Lee Hyun logged onto an item auction site. He checked whenever he logged on, and today as well an e-mail from the Dark Gamer Union had arrived.

Ding!

You are invited to the Dark Gamers Union.

To prevent information leakage, this email is only sent to a small number of selected people. For more information we would like to talk to you in person.

The Versailles Continent or in real life, whichever one is fine. Because our Dark Gamer Union can exist anywhere as long as there is darkness. With no obligations, we would like to meet and talk with you.

In this way, you'll be able to reach an understanding of our union and what we do in the union. You can take part in conversations and if you feel the need to keep in touch with another, you could even find a good partner.

Lee Hyun ignored the e-mail and began to write an auction post.

Among the items he acquired, those items that can be sold for cash, needed to be sold immediately. Because as time passes the market prices of Royal Road would slightly decrease.

It was an inevitable consequence of the increasing supply as the number of experienced users increased. However, as demand was similarly increasing, it wasn't a large problem to worry about.

The equipment of the vampires who had conquered the Morata area... those were still before the auction deadline. By now, their prices had reached from around a 100,000 to 400,000 Won.

“This much is good. When the highest bid has been made, it should reach the target price.”

Lee Hyun entered an open auction and then registered the items to be sold. The priorities were two of the items that he had received from the High Priest of Freya.

“Agatha's sword or the High Priest's ring will be able to fetch a fairly high price.”

There are market prices for common items. However, for items such as these that are difficult to obtain, the prices vary widely depending on the people who want to buy it.

If you met a person who really needed it, it could be sold for an expensive price, but if you didn't meet that sort of person, you might not receive a reasonable price.

“It’ll be good if it sells well....”

Lee Hyun uploaded the auction post onto the site and went to sleep.

Overnight, a large fuss was raised on the auction site.

“It’s him! He’s posted something!”

“There’s no one else apart from him with a Triple Diamond rating. The ID that he’s posted with is the same as well.”

“It’s Weed! Weed really is selling an item from Royal Road.”

“This is really big news!”

When his account from the Continent of Magic was sold, Weed had already become a celebrity. Through Weed’s account, CTS Media had done several broadcasts on the Continent of Magic.

Now even among those not interested in games, there was no one who didn’t know of Weed. Lee Hyun’s ID from the item trading site.

That was something that the users definitely remembered. Until now, Weed had sold one or two items, but among those no really good items had been sold.

Death Knights' equipment weren't very popular at times, and there weren't many people who needed vampire capes, boots, and gloves. So it hadn't received any attention.

“Agatha's holy sword! Rose-patterned gloves! High priest's ring! This is the Church of Freya's. This is the equipment used by the Church of Freya's paladins.”

The gloves that had been engraved with roses were only of the level of an uncommon item, so the market price wasn't high.

However Agatha's sword that was used by paladins of the Church of Freya was one of the most popular items. The equip level limit was low and the attack was high.

You could even use a sacred blessing five times a day with it, so it was a popular item preferred anyone with a class that wielded swords.

Someone had looked at list of the items Lee Hyun had uploaded, and after some research, had written this post. This post quickly spread throughout the internet.

Weed from Continent of Magic is playing Royal Road! Weed has put on an auction site Freya's paladins equipment! At once, many people wrote posts on the auction.

- Has that Weed really become part of the Church of Freya?

- Could he have become an actual paladin?

- Throughout the entire continent, the number of people who have become paladins as part of a church still hasn't reached a 100. To become a knight of a kingdom or a lord is easy, but it's said that to become a paladin of a church you have to overcome an extremely difficult situation...

- It's truly Mr. Weed. He's impressive in Royal Road as well.

The commenters on the auction posts were talking amongst themselves. Joy and surprise could be seen in them at the fact that Weed was playing Royal Road.

Those from the Continent of Magic, and those who had heard stories of the chaotic Weed on the internet had gathered together. However several people revealed frank disappointment.

- If it's the Weed from Continent of Magic, then for us who played the game at least, he was a legendary presence.

- That's right. It was like there was nothing impossible for him. He would go and conquer dangerous hunting grounds. In the hunting grounds that Weed swept through, there wouldn't be a single monster left. To us who remember his footprints...

- He was a person who was always alone and that was all he needed. For that conqueror to become a paladin of the Church of

Freya is below my expectations.

- He who had solitude and an absolute strength became in some ways an object of worship. Now attention will be focused on him. Though he rose to the ultimate position in a different game, will he merely become a slightly stronger person in Royal Road?

- A year has passed since Royal Road first appeared. To be starting now is irrational. Any more of him will be boring.

- Seeing Weed's name made me happy, but there is no need here for something like an idol.

The commenters laid out their contentious opinions. For the one known as Weed, the figure who had become the symbol of gaming, the people were divided between those who congratulated Weed for becoming a paladin of the church of Freya, and those who were disappointed that though he was a bit strong he wasn't at his former absolute strength.

Naturally, while this was going on, attention was drawn away from the auction post. Beneath their attention, the price of the goods that Lee Hyun had put up for the auction climbed up very slowly.

In the meantime someone appeared. He urgently posted a single line of writing.

- I have just logged out from playing Royal Road.

This kind of post incited the usual strong opposition.

- Who was asking?

- No one cares about whether you logged out or not.

Within a moment these cynical commentators followed each other up. Then the person who had first uploaded the post wrote a more detailed post and posted again.

- In Versailles Continent time, about 5 hours ago, in concert the NPCs of Royal Road began telling stories relating to Weed. NPCs across the continent are shouting out the tale of his adventure in defeating the True-blood Vampire clan, who played an important role in the Magician of Darkness Barkhan Demoph's Immortal Legions, and returning the Church of Freya's sacred relic. I was also a user in the Continent of Magic. I heard talk that Mr. Weed had set paladin's equipment for sale and I came here wanting to confirm this. So this was truly something done by Mr. Weed. I'm filled with admiration.

- What did you say? Barkhan's Immortal Legion?

- Isn't that said to be one of Royal Road's strongest forces?

- Moreover, if it's the True-blood vampire clan, that's a group with individuals whose levels are over 270. Their leader Lord Torido is over Level 400...

- I'm speechless! I just can't believe this.

The people were distrustful and tried to ignore the post. It was a self evident truth that the difficulty of a quest to return the Church of Freya's sacred relic and eradicate the True-blood Vampire clan would be high.

To say that one person had solved this quest couldn't be accepted. However the evidence was too obvious.

The equipment used by the paladins of the Church of Freya and the High Priest's ring!

Especially the High Priest's ring, as from what had been said about it, it was known that only someone who had provided a very large service for the church would have been given it.

Even if you had become a paladin, it wasn't an item that you would just receive. In addition, there was another piece of evidence that could not be denied.

The vampires' items that had been put up for sale by Lee Hyun last time. The vampire's mantle and boots that were still up for auction did not leave any more room for doubt.

Lee Hyun slept for 4 hours and opened his eyes before the sun had even risen.

He quickly wore his clothes and headed to the morning market. It was in order to buy the side-dishes for breakfast and for his younger sister's lunchbox.

Of course the school provided food, but nowadays there weren't many people that ate that. The nutrition was poor and the origins of the ingredients could not be trusted.

Even if food poisoning occurred only rarely, wouldn't it still be a big problem if it was caught.

‘Though it's a critical period of youth....’

He had to prepare good food for the sake of his little sister who was working hard on her exam studies.

Even if this wasn't the case, to prevent his sister from feeling any more sorrow from the loss of their parents, he wanted her to eat food filled with love.

While Lee Hyun roved the producer's market he bought fresh vegetables and meat. He didn't forget to properly cut down the prices.

Even in shops that didn't give a good discount on their prices during the day, by greeting them early in the morning and making his face familiar, it was possible to purchase goods pretty cheaply.

As he had originally taken all responsibility for the household

chores on himself, he had a certain confidence in his cooking.

However the reason that his cooking skill had now rapidly advanced was because of Royal Road.

Now he held confidence that in cooking at least he wouldn't come second to anyone. It was of a level that he could find a job in a restaurant's kitchen.

“Yawn! Oppa, good morning.”

“Did you wake up just now?”

When he returned from looking around the market, his sister emerged from her room rubbing her eyes.

“Go wash yourself. You'll be late for school.”

“It's okay. There's still enough time.”

“Don't act lazy. If it's something you have to do, do it quickly.”

“Tch! It's like every day there's only nagging. That aside, is the preparation for the GED going well?”

Lee Hyun had made a promise with his grandmother.

The promise was that he would pass his GED, as he had not been able to graduate from high school normally. However he still hadn't even taken a look at his books.

If there was time to study geography, he would take another look at the map of the Versailles continent. Instead of studying Korean history, he had to read the history books of the Versailles continent.

Because if you wanted to be a great adventurer you had to know background history. However he didn't have the heart say something like that.

“Of course! I'm studying hard, so don't worry.”

If you looked closely it wasn't a lie, after all wasn't studying this rather than that still studying all the same.

“Okay. I'll trust you.”

As his sister washed, Lee Hyun prepared the breakfast. As it was becoming winter and the weather was turning chilly, he prepared a refreshing natural soup, red bean rice, and plain side-dishes.

“Thank you for the food.”

After he sent his little sister to school, a few minutes of free time became available.

“Now then, shall I see if how much the prices of the items I put up for sale have risen?”

Lee Hyun connected to the item auction site. However the number of bidders on the auction post was no fewer than 140,000 people.

“What is this....”

It was obvious 140,000 people had placed a bid, but the highest price for the items didn't even reach 230,000 Won.

Even if Agatha's Holy Sword was sold for next to nothing, it was still an item that would go for at least 2,000,000 Won.

“Who seriously bid 230,000 Won? And if 140,000 people took part, can this price be real?”

Lee Hyun didn't have a clue so he clicked on the auction post.

- Mr. Weed, you are really impressive, even if it was only once a would like to wear Mr. Weed's items! However as I don't have any spare money I can only join in with this.

The person who had wrote this was the first to bid 500 Won on the auction. Many people who wanted to participate in an auction would start bidding from 10 Won, so the amount was meaningless.

- Congratulations on finishing the quest from the church of Freya. Please keep your spirit as a Continent of Magic user and do your best!

The second person to upload a post, raised the auction to 501 Won. After that it became a spectacle.

- Mr. Weed, good luck! 502 Won.

- Mr. Weed, you're amazing! 503 Won.

- I respect you. Work hard. 504 Won.

- Uh, is this a new auction game? 505 Won.

- Haha! This looks like fun. I want to get involved as well. 506 Won.

- This is, this is.... 601 Won.

- Please keep to the pattern. 602 Won.

It was these people's own way of showing their affection through fun. It was an expression of their friendliness as they slowly raised the auction price.

Thanks to the participation of many bidders in the auction, it was quickly brought to the attention of other people. Rumors spread over the internet so that people who hadn't even heard of Weed went looking for it.

- Ah! These really the items because sold by the person rumored to be Weed.

- I have arrived for the pilgrimage.

- It's already over 90,000 people. The auctions prices are over 120,000 Won.

- Even without the duplicate bids, over 60,000 people have become involved. Unite through the auction post!

- Hey! Who just cowardly bid 200,000 Won....

- If you don't properly obey the order, we'll find who did it and take revenge. Be careful. Start again from 200,001 Won.

- Let's try to reach up to a million people!

Chapter 2: Jack Of All Trades

“Royal Road? When we left we expected you to study, and now you’re playing with toys!”

“Now write an application for reinstatement”

“And if that doesn’t help, you can sit at home all day and prepare for the exams yourself!”

When the parents of Surka, Pale, Irene, and Romuna learned that their children were playing Royal Road in secret during their absence, they received an endless amount of nagging.

However, their children didn’t just sit around all day. They thought of a cunning plan and eventually their parents were lured into Royal Road.

“Oh! Pale, I’m going to change weapons but I’m 4 gold short, can you lend me some money? Don’t worry I’ll pay you back with interest!”

In hunting and fighting monsters, their parents were inexperienced. However, they were still able to do well. They were owners of a small family shop in game, and they opened one store after another. Their shops sold things ranging from weapons and clothing to skill books. They even opened a restaurant. As their parents supported their kids with skill books, a good bow, or even the divine knowledge of the priest, they in turn hunted loot for

them. As a result, they got closer and closer to the coveted 200th level

And then in the Kingdom of Rosenheim the NPCs began to talk:

“Do you know about the adventurer Weed? He dealt with the terrible vampire clan and freed the people of Mora.”

“Oh, Weed, the benefactor of the Order of Freya! Knowing that there are heroes makes life easier, doesn’t it? I heard that he was from the Rosenheim Kingdom, and they say, the

King is looking for him.”

Even in real life, gun shops, pharmacies and even flower girls from the market - everyone was talking about Weed.

When word reached Pale and his party, they realized that Weed completed a difficult and dangerous task, and immediately sent their congratulations:

“Congratulations, Weed.”

“Well done!”

“Next time, tell us all about it in detail.”

“Haaa!”

“Swoop!”

“Urraaa! Monsters!”

The Geomchis rushed forward, and a brave headless soldier quickly began backing away. No matter how brave he may be in the game, at the sight of so many opponents even monsters would get nervous and tremble. Opponents, not showing fear, boldly attacked the enemy and easily too!

Rough, casually dressed players with blazing eyes of greed desired one thing: Experience

“Ha-ha-ha! Geomchidulchi?”

“Yes. I'm ready.”

“Attack!”

“Hip-hip!”

An avalanche of players struck the headless soldier. They jumped on the monster as if someone was going to steal it.

None of Geomchis knew how to game. Therefore, they went after

high level monsters first, but they did not consider them worthy opponents.

“Kill them all!”

They were all looking for new places to hunt and they finally got to Lavias.

All this time they only sought to battle and fight strong monsters, so their levels grew at an astonishing rate.

Always together, a crowd of 505 people, they roamed the expanse of Royal Road. One large cohesive group. Students and instructors lived together within the school, so they could gather quickly and play in Royal Road. Also, fighting monsters was seen as part of their training, so they spent a lot of time in game and hunted the most powerful monsters they could find.

They started as Weed did with scarecrows, and then consistently overcame many dungeons. When there was an enemy, the students threw all their energy into fighting and eventually won.

The only thing that interested them besides their swords was battle. They did not take any quests, because they were too lazy to bother. In addition, their appearance was very shabby. They were very poor and often hungry players.

The teacher put his hands behind his back and, while laughing, said:

“3 copper? Oh-ho-ho! So much energy spent on this monster and we got nothing. Apparently, we are weak. Guys!”

“Yes, Master!”

“Will we pick these pennies? Or will we become stronger and kill monsters that drop gold?”

“Sir, for you, we'll go anywhere!”

After those words the disciples and mentors had no choice, holding back tears, following the the words "First the sword!" Understandably their fear of starvation was greater than their fear of monsters.

They even shared the last crumbs of bread, and this further strengthened the friendship between them.

The Geomchis were not afraid of monsters.

“Sooner or later, we will stop dying from hunger!”

The Geomchis became focused with their eyes brimming with intensity.

You either die fighting, or you die fighting hunger.

So they traveled across the expanse of Royal Road and raised their level to 130.

In Laviyas they heard that they could change their profession. People on the street said that the soldiers gave many jobs, and if you killed a famous monster then you would also gain glory and money. Also with a new profession you would gain a significant increase in strength and agility, and a bit of armor durability. A job for true connoisseurs of battles!

But in any case, we should not think that their job change was based on the increase of stats. No, the Geomchis felt that they were heirs to Korean martial arts, and with their pride they lived and died.

Martial arts - it's their nature, their lives, and that is why all 505 people at the same time changed their profession. Well, their first job was a warrior, so the change to martial artist seemed like the next logical step.

“Have you heard about the adventurer Weed?”

“This time Weed has done something remarkable!”

Of course, this news could bypass by so many ears. When the Geomchis heard the news they were all happy.

“Ohhh!”

“If Weed made a feat so can we!

Feelings that are in every man.

Ambition! Desire for glory!

A Burning passion!

“Geomchidulchi!”

“Yes, Master.”

“Find out where the most powerful monsters are.”

“I’m already on it.”

Geomchidulchi first called Pale. He had long understood the torment of information searching, and figured it would be better to whisper Pale.

“Mr. Pale.”

“Yes, Geomchidulchi...”

At this time Pale, Irene, Surka, and Romuna were hunting.

He was a little scared that they would have some wild request.

But this time, nothing happened. Generally, the Geomchis lived with dignity and pride, they did not forget about the food aid, and in the future always thanked their rescuers.

On the other hand, Pale and his party had long gotten accustomed to their strange requests.

“Who's the strongest?”

“What? Wait ... no way....”

“Just tell me who and where. We'll do the rest.”

Pale was shaken a bit, because he knew what they were going to do.

The Green Dragon Biakis loved the peace and quiet. He liked to think of himself as the guardian of the forest. With that thought, he lived peacefully for centuries.

Biakis was fast asleep in a hollow on the top of one of the mountains, but when he heard the noise of people, his eyes became wide open.

“Criminals?”

Sometimes a group of adventurers trespassed on his domain. Sometimes even the strongest players in the continent of Versailles strayed from groups and went to hunt the dragon.

Each time, Biakis ruthlessly punished them.

“This time, you will also die” - thought the dragon angrily

The Green eyes of Biakis were filled with anger. From wherever he looked, people fearlessly approached. Even if a few fought at a time they would still be too much. Although in general the dragon did not care.

“Urrra!”

“We have arrived! Angry wild dragon, show yourself!”

He had never been insulted before. Biakis was furious. He opened his mouth wide, as if to yawn, and then took a deep breath ...

“Fuuuuu!”

Liberty City was one of the centers of trade in the Versailles continent. A huge amount of goods passed through its gates, and there were many transactions within the city walls. Virtually all artisans and guilds considered it an honor to open an office here.

Weed with Mapan sold all of their unnecessary items obtained from wolves and other monsters.

“Oh! I made 5600 gold” Weed said while rubbing his hands happily.

Compared to how much he had before, he made 2000 gold, and that was not small.

But it could have been much more. Weed saved a ton of money on medical herbs, by digging and collecting them, but almost all the armor and weapons he had were sold on the auction site for real money. If he sold them in the game, he would’ve had much more gold.

Selling all these loot from monsters, Weed carelessly went to a guild. Guilds were always crowded with a lot of people, especially if they were in combat occupations, but today in the blacksmithing guild sat 30 people compared to the scale of the large city it looked strange.

Upon entering, Weed looked with interest at the people sitting at the tables.

“I wanted to make swords, so I chose this profession. And now I’m so unhappy! All of my friends that I started with are already killing kobolds, and every day I have to swing a hammer, damn it! But if it were only that! I thought I could make much more interesting things... I’m sick of this”

“Yeah. I don’t understand why I chose this profession. It’s too boring. Right now I want to change jobs”

“You don’t say. I was here for a week making swords and what do you know? They are far worse than the ones dropped by kobolds! “

Players sat and whined because of their profession. Pathetic. In fact, the profession of a blacksmith was not so bad. It all depended on how you looked at it

“By the way, have you heard the news about the blacksmith Thor?”

“I heard that he’s the first player to reach the intermediate level in blacksmithing, and now he’s intermediate lv 4.”

“No. He’s already at intermediate 5.”

“Wow! I heard all the guilds want him.”

“Of course, he’s a blacksmith that can strengthen armor and weapons. When will we get to his level?”

“Well ... there are already several other smiths with an intermediate blacksmithing ...”

“Ah! I’m so jealous.”

Weed heard enough empty laments and quietly climbed the stairs to the second floor of the guild. People were usually located at the bottom of the guild shop, and serious matters were decided on the floor above.

Weed waited until his turn came, and came to a moustachioed, muscular representative of the guild.

“What is the purpose of your visit?” said the NPC, tugging at his apron.

“I want to learn how to manufacture weapons and armor.”

“Oh! Really?” The representative said happily “Do you want to become a blacksmith?”

“No. I just want to learn how to forge.”

“Hmm. Actually, we don’t just teach anybody ... However, if you can fix this thing, then I will think about it.”

The NPC passed Weed a battered shield.

Cracked bronze shield. Strength: 3/28. Defense 10.

This shield is used in the exam to identify the gift of a blacksmith. Made of bronze. Size small, usually mounted on the brush. Protects you from the impact of a sword.

Requirements: Level 15.

Effects: Chance of enemy arrows missing increased by 14%.

Decreases critical attack by 19%.

With each level a skill gains the efficiency of maintenance increases. In the first level it can be repaired by 7 points, the second level is 10, and the tenth level 23 points. That is why, to fix the board at one time, it required an intermediate level repair skill.

Weed did not even get a sledgehammer; he just raised his hand and said:

“Repair!”

The board lit up with a bright light and glittered as if it were new.

“Um, it looks like you’re qualified” said the master scratching his head. “Okay, let's start with an explanation of how to hold the hammer. Look closely, grab like this and hit like that.”

You have learned the skills of a blacksmith.

Depending on the skill level, the requirements on equips go down by 2 percent or more. If you have mastered the skill of a blacksmith to master level, you can wear the items of other professions despite limitations.

Weed immediately bought iron tools for the manufacture of weapons, a good hammer, whetstone and some items. He also bought a portable smelter and the standard molds for weapons.

Typically a player could only work in a blacksmith shop, but with these items Weed could create weapons anywhere.

The process of forging items is very simple! Thanks to the portable stove, by using mana, metal can be melted and then poured into a mold. From there a work piece is made which after being hammered makes an item.

Hearing all this, Weed felt cheated.

Yes, the blacksmith profession required hard physical labor, but it eventually lost to the profession of a sculptor. During the

creation of sculptures, he had to be constantly on his toes in order to keep the image in his head, he had to carefully cut parts only to finally get a simple sculpture. Therefore, the blacksmith profession seemed simple and crude in comparison with his profession.

“Good.”

Weed went to the nearest anvil and opened his bag. Somewhere in the back were the pieces of ore that he picked up during hunting.

“First, melt ...”

He melted the ore and made a lot of iron. Then he gently poured it into the mold and, after waiting a bit, he got the first piece. Now, while the metal is not cured, he only had to give it a shape.

Tap-tap-tap!

He smacked the sword, and dipped it into cold water, and finally added a little touch up.

With that Weed produced his first sword.

Training Sword from the conductor:Durability: 70/70. Attack 4-

6.

Sword made from different types of metal, man made with the makings of the master. The attack Power is small, but it has high durability..

Requirements: None.

Effects: Strength +5.

You have raised the skill of a blacksmith by 36%.

“Oh! Cool! Well done!” Weed forged his first sword and now he truly enjoyed it.

Playing alone, sooner or later you start to talk to yourself. A kind of defense mechanism that Weed developed during the creation of sculptures in the province of Mora.

“It’s pretty average.”

Of course, the blade in his current situation was useless. But it can be sold in the armory shop for at least 70 silver! It had no attack option, but it was strong and provided an additional 5 strength.

For the first time he managed to create a Mighty Sword!

“And something in the profession of a blacksmith is useful.”

Fox figures, rabbits and other animals had no value, just souvenirs. But Weed sold them for silver coins and even for a time lived on the money. And now, he forged a sword that people would gladly use.

“Good. Well time to get to work!”

Weed decided to use all the ore he stockpiled during the game to make weapons. And he had a lot: some of it he gathered even though he was still a novice, some he gathered in the last 3 months in the province of Mora. He accumulated a lot of ore deposits and now he took them all out to smelt.

Melt in the oven, give it form and then smack!

Weed took the job seriously, putting all of his energy and soul into the new business. In parallel, he was trying to watch the other blacksmiths and repeat their actions, to quickly improve the skill of a blacksmith.

Your blacksmith level has risen to beginner 2.

The attacking characteristics of weapons are now stronger. Now you can make more weapons too.

Your blacksmith level has risen to beginner 3.

Now you can make bronze and copper armor.

Your blacksmith level has risen to beginner 4.

The attacking characteristics of weapons are now even stronger.

Now you can change the shape of a completed sword. Its strength decreases, but the attack will increase.

Your blacksmith level has risen to beginner 5.

Now the armor you make will become easier and more comfortable to wear.

You can now make boots.

Your blacksmith level has risen to beginner 6.

Offensive and defensive characteristics of manufactured items are greatly enhanced.

Weed stayed inside the smithy, day and night, for 10 days, creating blades. He forged more and more until he used up all of his ore.

But still it was a surprise: that in ten days, he greatly increased his skill of a blacksmith. All this for his profession.

For each level Weed gained a 3% increase in his initial attack, and a 5% increase for medium skill levels. In addition, to enhance his sculpture he had to unwittingly raise a host of other features in trade skills that would undoubtedly affect the boosting of his blacksmith level.

In general, the skill of craftsmanship influenced all non-combat professions. For example in cooking. For each level, the effects of prepared meals are amplified by 5%, and with the transition to the intermediate level they are amplified by 7%. Now Weed's handicraft level was intermediate 8, so all the effects of his dishes were amplified almost by 2.

In addition his handicraft skill also had an effect on his blacksmithing skill. By using the same materials he could make things 2 times stronger than others, and therefore get more experience. It was because of his handicraft skill that Weed didn't have to suffer the torments of newbie blacksmiths. Of course, by the time he reached intermediate blacksmithing the advantage would disappear, but Weed would still get a lot more experience than a regular player.

That's right, after spending 10 days smelting ore, he managed to improve his skills up to level 6.

Weed left the guild and went to the fishing guild.

“Do you want to enjoy spending day after day fishing, or do you hope to catch a legendary fish and become a legend sung by bards?” Asked the NPC wearing a vest with many pockets.

Perhaps joining the fishing guild was the easiest in the game. You just had to honestly answer a few questions, and then buy a fishing rod with floats.

Weed did not hide his true thoughts:

“I want to learn how to fish, so that when I'm hungry, I can eat.”

“Yes?” the NPC fisherman asked puzzled.

For many players in the game they became a professional fisherman for pleasure. While traveling to Versailles continent, you had to use a boat or ship, and there you could fish to pass time. But from all of answers he had received no one answered as Weed had.

The fisherman looked at Weed, as an unprecedented miracle, and laughed.

“An honest answer. Also, I see you're an excellent cook. Maybe someday, if you catch something good, you'll make me a tasty soup?”

“If it's a suitable fish, then no problem, I'll be happy to cook.”

“Hmm. Thank you. I'll give you some special bait.”

You have learned the skill of fishing.

You will never be hungry if you happen to be near a major source of water.

You can get water and food in rivers, lakes and seas. With each level of fishing gained so will your health.

You got bait for fishing, 30 shrimp.

Weed learned blacksmithing, fishing, and now thought deeply.

“Should I learn more or not?”

"Is this enough? Maybe I should skip the sewing skill. I already

have several production skills so I don't really have to learn another skill.”

His anxiety was caused by his childhood memories. At one time he had to work in a sewing factory, in a dirty, dusty environment. There, in order to make a few pennies he sewed buttons and ripped seams. Heavy, monotonous work, memories of which brought only pain. Besides, he got sick and sometimes could not come to work, and therefore he didn't get his salary for the last month.

But it was not in his nature to retreat.

Actually, there was another sorcerer skill, the ability to cast magic on the items, but Weed could not learn it because of the high level requirements. Therefore he could only learn all the trade skills.

Finally deciding, Weed went to the second floor of the Tailoring Guild.

“Hmmm ... if a person has good taste it would be easy to choose a good fabric and sew beautiful clothes “

“If you invest in a piece of their work, many people would want to wear such clothes. You want to learn to sew? Purred the spokeswoman

“Yes, I do.”

“And can you manage to sew on a button?” She asked squinting.

“Coo ... of course.”

Weed was able to sew on buttons as well as he used a spoon.

He sewed a few buttons, and received a new message.

You have learned the skill of tailoring

Saying goodbye to the representative, Weed left the guild. Unfortunately, in contrast to the Blacksmith Guild, tailors didn’t get jobs at the guild, so he sat in the corner of a street, and set to work.

In Liberty City people disappeared in the streets for days, leading a conversation or sunbathing, or doing anything else, so nobody paid attention to him. He cut a few pieces of fabric, then sewed them, and made his first clothes.

Your tailoring level has reached beginner 2.

You can now you can use a soft cloth to sew clothes.

Amazing! With his high Art level, and intermediate level handicraft skill he was able to immediately reach level 2.

He sewed a few fabrics he bought from the guild, and his skill level increased again. Weed did not suffer from stitching together pieces of fabric: the work was so familiar that he often didn't even bother to look at what he was doing. In real life, Lee Hyun often sewed buttons for his family or put patches on clothing.

Snip, snip!

Snip, snip!

Cut the fabric, sew a button!

Weed hands smoothly and gracefully fluttered over the clothes, as though his hands were a musician playing his instrument!

“Oh, great!”

“Look at his hands.”

“Excellent!”

More and more people started to pay attention to Weed as he pulled the fabric. Indeed, many players wandered the streets and just watched others, oh how easy it was! The people who were standing near Weed, lips were full of admiration, because he was very fast, and with just a few stitches he made clothes. But there were others

“And this is something you can wear?”

“I don’t know, maybe you can. I think they’re clothes ...”

“If they’re clothes then they suck. Look. No embroidery, absolutely simple.”

Weed vaguely heard the whispers of players did not pay attention to them. Why did they expect something outstanding from a level 2 tailor, although it was impossible to say that the clothes were bad? After a while, sitting in the street under the eyes of many onlookers, Weed raised his tailoring skills up to beginner 4.

Now, when the bag was stuffed to the brim with weapons and clothing, Weed decided to take a risk.

“Slowly ...”

Weed pulled from the bottom of his buckskin bags. He got it as a gift from the people of Mora

High quality deer skin: Durability 5/5.

Items associated with craft skills.

Can be made into leather clothing or other equipment.

Depending on the skill level, the effects obtained can be strengthened or changed

Requirements: Tailoring level 2.

Weed probably should not have used the material until he reached the intermediate level.

But Weed had firmly decided something. Time was money. It was important to quickly increase the skill level, and if he had to use good materials, well then this would be his fate

Snip, snip!

Weed very slowly and carefully sewed clothes.

Monk Tunic:Durability: 40/40 Defense: 13.

Men's tunic made of deer skin.

Cover the body excellently and emphasizes the figure.

Suited for a monk.

Requirements: Level 15.

Effects: Gives a 2% boost in agility

Your tailoring skill has greatly improved.Your Tailoring level has reach beginner 5.

Through skilful work, seams will not break, and the strength or garments are increased.

To sew a tunic Weed spent four pieces of skin.

“Just look ... it looks good ...”

“Yeah. It looks soft even in appearance and it made out of excellent material.”

Spectators were amazed that in less than a couple of hours, an unknown player was able to make such good clothes.

"Are sewing skills really that easy to master?"

“I don’t know. My friend initially chose to become a tailor, but for a whole day of work he gets only defective clothes, so he deleted his character ...”

“Being a tailor is not easy. I also know many people who have chosen it, and then shedding many tears.”

“How can this guy learn so quickly and sew such good clothes”

Weed was still sitting and he ignored the people’ talking. He took out a few pieces of deer skin and began to sew gloves and boots.

After the quest, he received 200 pieces of deer skin, so he was not short on supplies

So, slowly working, Weed raised tailoring skill to beginner 9.

In theory, by using a special material, it would not take a long time to get to the intermediate level of a profession. But the level simply would not grow.

This was because there was a restriction. The creators of the game decided that, over time, high level players could start to learn trade skills. Because they would have access to better materials they would have a great advantage over players that started off with craft skills. Therefore, there was a time limit imposed on created things, after which the player would no longer receive experience.

Chapter 3: Prismatic Clothing Auctions

Daring people like Weed, in search of adventure, often chose to start off in the capital of small kingdoms, like Rosenheim. Usually these players would then head to large populated cities where it was easier to get a good weapon, join a good party, and roam without straying far from the city gates.

At the main gate of Liberty City, there was a flock of people surrounding one person. He wore a strange helmet, a necklace, a cloak, and conspicuous white gloves.

"If you leave me your stuff, I'll fix it for free, and it'll be as good as new! If you bring me your leather or fabric, then I'll make you good clothes! If you bring me ore, then I'll give you a weapon or armor! If you bring me meat, I'll make you delicious food! In addition, the food I roast will increase your vitality by at least 150 points! And it's delicious!"

Nevertheless, such cries did not attract many players. The main reason was because the man offering his services was poorly dressed and badly armed.

"Is it true that if I bring you meat, it'll increase vitality?"

"I have a few skin pooches; can you really make them into clothes?"

However, the crowd shot down the few hopefuls, and shook their

heads disapprovingly.

"Another impostor has appeared."

"Guys, do not fall for the hype. It's just a ploy to gain your items and escape."

"Yeah, a lot of new players do this, there are types of people like him."

"Think with your head. He sews clothes, prepares meals, repairs and forges weapons - have you ever heard of such a man? This is a scam!"

"Man, if you're a newbie, do something else, go hunting. Why do you try to fool other players? Ay-ay-ay ..."

After hearing such talk, many players grew angry.

"Oh, you dirty bastard!"

"Get out of here, you liar!"

The man at the gate was called Weed.

Standing calmly, he quietly listened to the torrent of insults. Yes, it was unpleasant but that was life. If you think about it, they were

not wrong to suspect him. It would pretty much be impossible to find someone that knew how to sew, cook, and forging.

Not to mention, Weed even knew how to sculpt and fish. Learning new skills was not easy. It wasn't as simple as going to a guild and training. First, you had to work hard, and you had to develop the skills through constant repetition as Weed had. Therefore, to meet such a player in the game was somewhat incredible.

Even he wouldn't have believed it if he were told of such a person in the beginning. But Weed wasn't a newbie anymore. He was experienced in making money. Before, if he had so many players shouting and criticizing him, he would've experienced shock and tried to run away, but not this time.

During his empiricism, Weed sold hundreds of figurines, gained experience, and learnt how to measure the situation. He knew how, and what to do in order to squeeze out the maximum profit even when selling something simple. Weed was a professional in these matters.

"Let's start with the simple problem"

The main causes of distrust were - the erroneous idea that he was low level and the suggestion that he was trying to scam them. It was necessary to eliminate them, and then the situation would change dramatically.

"Well, that's that. Calling Death Knight!"

Weed with a disgruntled look on his face took out a red necklace and whispered something. Black smoke appeared, and out came the death knight.

"You called me master?"

"Stay here and do not move."

"Got it. Master."

The Death Knight stood menacingly near Weed. He wished to discipline the players that insulted him but money came first. The results didn't take long to achieve.

"Hey, what's with that guy?"

"He called a Death Knight."

"That's a Death Knight? Yes, it looks gloomy ..."

"Yeah, it's a death knight. It looks exactly like the one I saw online"

"Death Knights are above level 200. I don't believe it. Maybe it's magic? Is he a dark wizard?"

"A Dark Wizard - it's a second job advancement for mages? So it requires a level of 280 ..."

Now the unrest slowly turned into interest.

"Why would a man with such a high level scam newbies?"

"Yes, it's all mixed up. So is he scamming or not?"

"If you think about it, maybe he's telling the truth ..."

People began to slowly gather around Weed.

Those who shouted the loudest and accused him of scamming were the first to come. One of these people uncertainly handed Weed the cheapest meat he had.

"You can cook it right?"

"Yes. Wait a while. Payment will be 30 coppers."

Weed made a fire in the hearth and began to cook the meat. Adding a bit of spice, he flipped it a couple of times.

"Try it."

From the fried meat spread an attractive aroma. Everyone looked

at the guy that got the meat. He hesitantly and cautiously bit off a little piece.

Yum-yum!

And ate it all instantly.

Then he quickly opened his bag, pulled out all the meat he had and handed it to Weed.

My vitality increased by 160 points. I'll pay, please cook it!

"Me too!"

"And me ..."

The situation changed dramatically. Many players sought him as soon as possible to cook their meat. An additional 160 points in vitality greatly added health and allowed them hunt more powerful monsters.

"Good! All right. Stand in line, please!" Weed shouted in order to be heard by all the players.

The line became huge. Roasting meat did not require special attention, and Weed quickly served people. He threw the meat on the grill and fried it expertly, while listening to a lot of questions.

"Next time I'll get more meat, will you cook them too?"

"What's your name, I will look for you again."

Weed gently smiled and answered every question.

"My name is Weed. Visit me any time."

"Weed. Understood. I'll look for you next time."

"You said Weed? Coincidentally ..."

In Royal Road nicknames were not unique. So many people played Royal Road that if you didn't allow people to have the same name, the game would have many strange and meaningless names ones with numbers attached . Therefore, developers took care of this by introducing a system where a unique number is assigned to each person.

"Do you happen to be the one who fulfilled the task for the Order of Freya?"

"Yes, please tell us!"

All the talk about Weed's success started in Liberty City, so it is not surprising that in the crowd there was not one person who had not heard of Weed. Yes, and in the whole game, as an NPC reached lv 30 it would start talking about someone in the continent.

"If that is the case ..."

Before Weed could say anything, the players themselves all discussed together.

"Incidentally, is this the same Weed from the Continent of Magic?"

"No, it can't be. Weed is a common name."

"Exactly. A lot of players have that name"

"Yeah, my friend also uses the nickname Weed."

After what Weed did in the 'Continent of Magic' the name Weed in 'Royal Road' became extremely common. When Weed was selling figurines, he met 6 buyers with the same name.

That is why the Pale, Surka, Romune and Irene did not even imagine that they were playing with the very same Weed.

"Hmm, it's still strange that out of nowhere appears a player named Weed and he begins to help players ... weird"

"So what? He called a Death Knight; as far as I know, even among the summoners there is none who can do so."

"Yes, let's think about the evidence in front of our eyes. Weed also destroyed the clan of vampires, did he not?"

"Yeah, they say he has a high level of faith. Tell me, where can a cook gain faith?"

"That's right, no player from the craft professions will be able to complete such a difficult task."

"Take a look. Weed is silent and isn't saying anything."

So, after much discussion the players persuaded themselves that this was not The Weed.

In any case, now no one called him a fraud.

Everybody thought that he was such a great cook, that the death knight decided to serve him.

Weed then again, as before, shouted out:

"If you leave me your stuff, I'll fix it for free, and it'll be as good as new! If you bring me your leather or fabric, then I'll make you good clothes! If you bring me ore, then I'll give you a weapon or armor! If you bring me meat, I'll make you delicious food! In addition, the food I roast will increase your vitality by at least 150 points! And it's delicious!"

Now people with pieces of skin gave it to him.

"Make me clothes."

"Me too."

"I'm new, and I have no armor."

Weed quickly examined the skin. As he expected, most of them were the skins of wolves or rabbits, and very rarely an ordinary deerskin.

"What kind of clothes do you make?"

"Please make me some pants."

"I will prepare you stylish and comfortable pants with good protection; wait a little, I will do everything"

Weed took from his pocket a needle, thread and scissors. Cut the skin and made pants. Of course, he didn't just pick up the pieces and stitch leather. Weed first estimated the size of the guy.

"If he's that size, then ..."

He cut off the skin and then stitched excellent pants. He made

the hips loose, with wide pockets ... On the bottom edge, reaching up to the heel, he visually lengthen the leg. Weed thought of everything and made stylish pants out of simple skin.

Quality leather pants :

Durability: 30/30. Protection 10.

Pants made of rabbit skin. This is not the best material for sewing, but thanks to the amazing talent of the tailor its deficiency was overcome.

"It turned out well" Weed even surprised himself. But he showed nothing besides a confident smile, as he handed over the pants.

For Weed, comparing the pants with his current clothes was pointless. As for the newbie, the pants would provide good protection for a long time. And it was all thanks to his intermediate handcrafting skill, without such this would not have happened.

"Wow, that's so good ..."

the newbie said as he took the pants from Weed's hands. He was

speechless, rabbit skins, one of the most worthless materials in the game were turned into pants that could be worn without problems until level 30.

"That'll be 1 silver."

As Weed received commissions he continued to sew clothes for a long line of players. Hats, shirts, and gloves, with just a few strokes of his arms. Weed didn't even have to concentrate. It was like working in a factory again, only this time he didn't have to work in a musty room but in the clean streets of Liberty City.

There was a cool and pleasant breeze, but people who were waiting in line only felt the sun burn their eyes.

"Wow! Thank you so much for such a cool tunic. I'll wear it now. And if I bring more skin, will you sew another dress?"

When beginners received their new armor they would dance with joy. With their new high-quality hunting clothes they would be able to hunt faster, and more securely.

Rumors of an unprecedented master spread already to the point where many players lined up in advance. Most immediately ordered food, clothing, and equipment repair. Only somewhere in the evening was there a player who nervously, handed Weed just three pieces of ore.

"You can really make armor?"

"Of course. What armor do you want? For the record, making armor requires 30 pieces of ore. And with just this, by adding the skin I can make some boots."

"Then please make some boots."

"That'll be 3 silver."

"Good."

Weed melted the ore in the furnace, poured it into the selected forms and received the boots.

Unclean Iron boots:

Durability: 35/35

Defense: 6.

Iron alloy boots. Although the defense is not high, they are comfortable and durable.

Effects:

Dexterity +2.

Usually boots made of iron and bronze have more protection than boots made of leather. But there was not enough metal.

And then, in a burst of inspiration!

Weed cut on the boots a fox with nine tails. A final touch reflecting his personality. A kind of signature.

Tink!

The properties of the object have changed.

Artistic Unclean Iron Boots:

Durability: 38/38

Defense: 7.

Iron alloy boots. Although, the defense is not high, they are comfortable and durable. The image of a sly fox further increases the strength and health of the host.

Effects:

Dexterity +2

Strength +1

Stamina +1

Intermediate level sculpting was designed to improve the performance of objects. Maybe not much, but still two features were added.

Other skills could be applied to sculpting and only now it occurred to him that sculpting could be applied to other skills also.

"Damn it, the increase wasn't that great. It was good, but only slight better. "

The more Weed played the better he understood that all craft professions require secondary skills. Just like in life. Prominent figures who have left their mark in history, have been diversely gifted in art, mathematics and other sciences.

And they were all well-known sculptors!

Weed finally realized that being a sculptor was not as much to the artisan craft as an art. It was a peaceful occupation that did not help battle. While this was not entirely true, the effects of beautiful sculptures had often rescued Weed; but to create such a work was so hard that it did not matter. The usual sculptures were just useless trinkets.

In addition, to raise the levels in sculpting was a lot harder than other professions. While soldiers battled, and blacksmiths forged weapons, sculptors had to create conventional sculptures and languish.

And even if after the labors they were able to reach the intermediate level of skill, the situation could not be changed, so to create a beautiful sculpture was not so easy.

But these were no useless professions: for example, the higher the level of the cooking skill was, the more tasty and healthy food he could prepare. It was the same with the sculpting.

Engraving technique and statue destruction - a unique ability of the sculptor that will never be known to any other class. And only through the work of the sculptures can one so quickly develop the skill and craftsmanship to master the skills of other professions. However, for such progress required great tenacity and originality.

"Here you go."

"Thank you" said the player who bought the boots, and in a burst

of gratitude gave a 1 gold.

If he were to buy it from a shop it would cost at least 10 gold. In addition, the boots met with the requirements, so the player paid more than the original price with no regrets.

"Thank you."

"Be sure to take a look."

"I found a golden thread; can I give it to you?"

The things he made sold like hot cakes. Weed worked with full dedication, but the line never decreased, in contrast it grew.

Metal, leather, or fabric, even things that were usually thrown away, in the hands of weed it turned into treasure. Weed never refused a job and the players adored him.

Weed was trembling with excitement.

In the past, when selling his figurines he had to carefully assess his customers and make great efforts to convince players to buy them. But now, thanks to the skill of a blacksmith, everything he did resulted in a cheer. He was doing really useful things, and people were grateful for it.

"Hmm ... when compared with the profession of a sculptor,

everything else looked extremely useful."

After these thoughts, all pre-thoughts that showered love for his profession immediately disappeared and Weed began to be skeptical again.

"Maybe I should get a job change? I could become a blacksmith and put all of my effort into developing my skills. And then I'll just create beautiful things. I won't have to worry about money, because even if I stopped trying, money would still flow into my pockets.

Yes, the profession of a blacksmith was easier than a sculptor, but there were its advantages. However, Weed did not relax and back down from complaining:

"Eh ...it's too late though I really wanted to change it. Oh, my pitiful life. "

Weed without rest did one thing at a time. He took any material with some small commission and worked tirelessly at it. He had one main goal – to do more jobs, and quickly boost his skill level. The higher the level of the blacksmith, the better the tools they tried to use. So people were amazed at what Weed was making without the use of high quality tools.

"He's really a good person."

"Yeah, look at all the good things he's doing ..."

"He's simple and not greedy."

At the gates of Liberty City were two richly dressed men.

Behind one of the men hung a huge blade; it was a two handed sword that struck with a lot of force, and the other man was one of the few Druid Heliolaters in the game.

To become a follower of the sun, you had to be at least of level 250. To reach this level at this point in the game meant you were one of the highest level players.

They looked at Weed and whispered:

"Oh, a true master."

"Exactly. A conscientious and honest man"

"And smart. He cleverly thought ahead when he chose his profession..."

"Yes, starting with a craft profession is really reliable."

"I agree, and he doesn't just have one kind of skill but many..."

They stood and talked about Weed. Of course, they never found

out about all the agony Weed faced as a sculptor. In their eyes, he had a very clever and thoughtful game plan.

Everything he made scattered in no time.

Design! Due to his high 'art' all the items he made had excellent design. Quality! The stats of his items were much superior to their counterparts in the shops of traders.

In general, it was not surprising that his things sold so well.

Weed's name instantly spread throughout all adjacent lands. Some players, receiving messages from friends, even began to come from other settlements.

It was hard to find a good craftsman. Most players had to go with the standard weapon from monsters or buy from NPCs. In addition, many players had saved up skin, ore and other materials from their hunts.

Weed did not refuse anyone and with any material created useful goods. When the line built up to a considerable number of players he began selling his previously created deerskin clothes.

Full of hope Weed arranged for an auction:

"Sale of sewed clothes. Suitable for priests and monks. Good, high quality equipment from the skin of deer. The quantity is limited, so I will sell it to the one who offers the highest price!"

Suddenly, Priests and monks in the crowd eyes lit up. In the continent of Versailles there were not as many monsters with good cleric gear.

"One for 160 gold!"

"Over here 200 gold!"

Clothes sold out within a few moments. Weed did not scam them, the quality was excellent, and were meant for players over level 100.

For the tunics people offered 200 to 300 gold, and a hat and boots sold for 50 or more gold. Thanks to the auction he earned more than 1000 gold.

And long after the end of the auction people came up and whispered trying to find out, whether there was at least one thing from the hide of a deer.

A couple of days after the auction, Weed had served more than one hundred people, and then finally achieved the desired result.

Your blacksmithing skill has exceeded level 10 and has reached the intermediate stage.

New skills:

Sword Grind, and Armor Polish

Sword Grind – Grinds the sword, weapon damage is amplified

Armor Polish – confuses and dazzles enemies along with an increase in defense.

+5 To all stats

Reputation +50.

Art +3.

After some time his sewing skills reached the intermediate. Previously, Weed thought he would first raise sewing skills, but he was wrong because he didn't take into account that the majority of people in the game were soldiers and they only asked him to make swords. Therefore, his sewing skill was late.

Your tailoring skill has exceeded level 10 and has reached the

intermediate stage.

New skills: Ironing, and Hand washing

+5 To all stats

Reputation +50.

Art +70.

Ironing – increases defense

Wash - requires water. Wash your dirty clothes in the water. This will improve the defenses of the object. Severe washing will wear and tear clothes. Skill can be used no more than 3 times on one set of clothes.

+5 To all stats

Reputation +50.

Art +70.

On that day, when his skills passed the intermediate stage, Weed served his last two clients and made an announcement. He climbed

up on the table and, after looking around the crowd of players, many of whom came from neighboring kingdoms, shouted as loudly as possible to be heard by all:

"Hello everyone, I'm asking for your attention. Due to personal reasons, for a while I cannot sew clothes or make weapons. I'm sorry. But there is good news! After 4 days, I will finally expose a single product. My sewing has reached the intermediate stage, and now I can make clothes out of Prismatic cloth! Come again in 4 days and you will not be disappointed!"

After those words, Weed wrapped his things and fled.

"Prismatic cloth?"

"What's that?"

People came up with many theories, but eventually curiosity won out, and players, disconnected from the game to look for information on sites devoted to Royal Road.

Sovereign Prismatic Cloth

Durability 5/5.

Item artisan skills. Excellent material for clothing and other

equipment. During the manufacturing process 7 attributes will be chosen at random. Excellent protection from arrows and blunt weapons. To work with the fabric requires intermediate level tailoring.

It is now known where the fabric comes from but it is also known that it is not easy to get.

Tier 1 sewing material.

Effects: Grants seven randomly generated attributes.

Suddenly an unknown player shouted out that it was used to create high quality clothes.

Rumors spread on the internet faster than the speed of light. On the appointed day at the gates of the city, so many people had gathered that it was packed. Some people ran day and night from other kingdoms in hope to buy the clothes.

Yes, there were a lot of players, and various guilds were present. In the vast continent of Versailles there was a full on war between guilds, so in the auction, there were not friends, but implacable enemies.

All because of the hope to buy some unique items.

"Let's start the auction!"

Weed's auction was conducted by Mapan.

Of course, during the time he was crafting his face was seen by many, but now the crowd was ten, or twenty times larger, and he was sure someone would post a movie of the online auction. Weed didn't want to attract attention to himself and be identified as the Princess Knight, so he asked Mapan to hold his auction.

"So, the 1st lot ... Ah! Mr. Weed has prepared for us 13 items. For reference, one of them is unique, 5 are rare, and the rest are usual. So, let's start with ordinary objects. The first lot ..."

"1000 gold!"

"1500!"

"2400!"

"4000!"

The people fought to the last, so that at least one object fell into their hands.

Of course, things put up for auction are important, but so is the auction site and each participant - all heavily influencing the price

of the object. If you advertise and then sell in a remote village, where only a few players were, no one would buy.

To make a good auction, you must first gather those interested, and then carefully maintain and create heated competition for the goods between the players and their greed.

Here is the secret to an auction!

Thanks to a great-planned auction, Weed sold all his rainbow tunics. The next day, people continued to come to the old place, but Weed, as promised, was gone.

Chapter 4: Engraving Master Darone

Bensa River

It was the lifeline of the British Confederation. Strolling across the expanses of the continent, it was said that along the river were nine spectacular sceneries.

When Royal Road was just released, players were enchanted by the river.

With dazzling beauty and tranquility, it was a place that pleased all travelers.

For this reason, many players choose to start off in the British Confederation: sometimes just to picnic by the river!

Couples would be littered about the river. Even the strong torrential rain did not scare them off because the river was so beautiful.

"Look at that. Can it really be that beautiful?"

"It's as if the sky has come to meet the river."

"As the rain falls into the river, it runs into the sea and fills it. Just like how my heart is filled with our love."

"Aww, I love you."

"Me too."

The heavy rain fell on the earth overshadowed by a dark sky. With the rising mist, and thick white fog, an impression that the river and sky touching was created. As a result, a beautiful yet terrifying scene was portrayed.

Couples sitting lovingly together under a tree would watch the scene as they made promises of eternal love to each other. Conversation made at that time would remain in their memories for a long time.

But the world can be quite cruel to love!

"Wow! There's a lot of water."

"Yeah there's a lot ..."

"It's a little bit strange."

"I'm scared..."

"Oh no! The water is getting closer!"

"Huh, I think it's closer than before."

"Oh no! Oh no! Oh no!"

The river was constantly changing. Many small streams ran into the river and nourished it. As the streams filled it, the rain gave it momentum. Eventually it would go so fast that the water would explode flooding its banks.

"Ahhhh!"

"Save me!"

"We have to run!"

"This is hell!"

Huge waves swallowed careless couples. In the thick fog, it was a battle for life and death.

People were screaming, running, trying to escape, but to no avail: the river showed no mercy to them.

Spectators watched from afar, those that couldn't stand the sight of lovers chose a place far away from the river, and watched happily as they were swept away. In real life, they lived a life of solitude, so an indifferent smile decorated their faces.

"Hehehe!"

"Ahahah!"

"Amazing!"

Even for all the money in the world, you could not see such a sight. The fearsome waves as they carried the couples away. The snow storms in the province of Mora. In the vast continent of Versailles these sights were priceless.

The Bensa River flowed peacefully. After the horrendous downpour, the river returned to its natural state, a majestic river flowing smoothly and slowly.

People living near the place at the time would find themselves becoming calm, and soothed.

However there were others, one person had cold and prickly eyes as he looked down at the people below.

The man was Weed.

"Ha, well now, I'll be sure to catch something big!"

It had been a week since he began to fish in the river. While fishing he honed his sculpting skills but that was the only thing he made progress on. His blacksmithing and tailoring levels rose

quickly because of his high handcrafting skill but fishing was different. It all depended on what kind of fish you caught.

And if you used the best bait, no one could predict what kind of fish you would get and what the fish would do.

Maybe you would catch something, or maybe the fish would just eat the bait.

Weed had been sitting on the bank of the river for a whole week and he only reached beginner level 3 for fishing.

"Definitely something large. Yes, I'm going to catch a huge fish."

He closely followed the float with his eyes, without losing focus for even a second. Spinning in the crystal water the fish would try to steal the bait on the hook.

"Selling expensive fish!"

If it wasn't for the salary he received from the CST Media, money from the awards he gained from the Order of Freya, the revenue he made from repairing items, and the auction, Weed would not have had the opportunity to waste time. However, with money, he could now relax and develop his fishing skills.

Although he was in such a serene setting, Weed shuddered at the thought of depositing his savings.

To pay for his sister's tuition, he needed to set aside 2 million won every month. Since he had no regular income, his payment would have to be postponed every month. Weed felt like the protagonist in a horror movie.

Not surprisingly, he shuddered because all of the money would only cover breakfast.

Even the fact that he opened an account at a savings bank for mutual credit, where the annual rate of interest was 2% above average compared to other banks, did not save him from his anxiety.

If the bank went bankrupt, the government would only return up to 50,000 won. That is if the bank was connected to a major politician. Also he was sceptical of the savings bank.

"South Korea's politicians are a hotbed of corruption. They often create a bank for money laundering, so it's not surprising that they cannot give large profits."

Every day while fishing, Weed could not stop thinking about sculptural design. As a moonlight sculptor, he was influenced heavily by the local ice sculptures in Mora.

"I wish I was at Baran or Laviase. The sculptures there are probably harmonized with their surrounding environment. Hmm, I wonder what kind of sculpture would fit a river landscape. "

Making a fine piece or even a grand piece was not so easy. He needed an original idea and he had to implement it perfectly.

"There's a flowing river, and I catch in it.... I know! I'll make something that attracts fish!" Weed jumped so that he almost dropped his bait.

He immediately contacted Mapan.

"Hey, Mapan!"

"Yes! Weed" he said with all of his attention and respect.

After the auction, he had gained several levels along with unshakable faith in Weed. He would even go so far to say that as long as you're with Weed, gold coins will fall from the sky into your pockets.

"I need a stone, the larger the better. Also make sure it's pure and clean."

"It'll take two days, especially since it's a rock."

Weed anxiously waited for Mapan as he fished. However, when he pulled his line up, often there was no fish.

Weed had spent so much good bait, and had nothing to show for

it.

"This is impossible!" Out of anger he threw the rod on the ground. "I'm missing something."

The gears in his head began to spin wildly. Faced with a crisis he became fully immersed searching for his mistake.

Then he heard a voice:

"Ho-ho, you need to understand something. Fishing is something that cleans your soul. Fish freely float in the river, carelessly and deliberately. That is why we want to catch them so badly, right? But once we catch them, then they are not free anymore, they become just a piece of meat."

On the river, there were a lot of players who loved to fish. Even more, in real life they were related to fishing in one way or another. And in Royal Road, these players did not play because they liked to game, but because they liked fishing.

It was a fishing club.

For them, Royal Road became a place of promise. They fished in amazing places not found on Earth. Ate delicious, exotic fish and chatted with interesting people. Their characters were developed only through fishing.

Luckily, in Royal Road, players are not forced to do one thing. If

you choose a craft profession, it does not mean that you have to sit day and night, making stuff. Also, craft skills raised a large variety of skills. For example, if you made armor, it would raise craftsmanship, blacksmithing, and a couple of other skills.

With this, all players could go hunt monsters and not feel too weak. As with sculpting and other skills, fishing also helps a player survive. It increases vitality, stamina, and endurance, and it also increases your reflexes because all you do all day is wait for a fish to bite your hook.

"I'll learn how to fish. I don't have to raise my levels again, but I'll have to relearn the basics of fishing."

Weed studied cooking by looking for new recipes in real life and in game. But he was too impatient to fish. As he reflected on his crisis he found one problem.

You can't rely on good bait and your fishing skill. Like engraving, you have to rely on your own skill, while the system assists you. But as the saying goes, "trust but verify" so Weed decided to approach the problem from another angle.

He joined the fishing club and began to learn the basics of fishing.

He learned how to select and string bait, how to choose a place for fishing, and much, much more.

"So... Depending on where you are, the kind of fish you catch will be different?" Weed asked the jolly bearded fisherman

"Yup, that's absolutely true. Think to yourself. At sea, you won't find river fish, and at a river you won't find any whales. "

"Uh... I already knew that. I mean does it matter where I fish along a river?"

"Tsk tsk" clicked the fisherman, squinting he said "Is the water in a river the same everywhere?"

There are deep places, and there are shallow waters. Stony places with seaweed, with pure water, mixed with food, without food, with cold water or with warm water. By the way, the latter is particularly important: When there is a convergence of cold and warm water, one can find there the most delicious fish..

"Oh. So that's how ..."

Weed realized that what he had thought initially was wrong. He would choose a secluded spot because he thought there would be no more fish in crowded areas. He then chose to sit among a group of fishermen but found it too noisy and crowded. However, now he knew that location mattered so Weed, without hesitating, fished near a skilled fisherman.

"Uhhh, this is great!" Weed said happily

After changing his location and selecting his bait, the quality of fish he caught improved. In addition, he caught much more fish than before.

"Here, I brought a stone" said Mapan, pointing to a cart with a big gray boulder inside.

"Thank you, Mapan."

"Ah. .. What are you going to do with it ..."

"Well, if you have the time, wait and see. Although I may be wrong ..."

"Are you going to make a sculpture?"

"Even though I know this might fail but..."

Mapan had seen Weed create amazing sculptures many times. He loved to observe him work, and sat watching on the ground, waiting for him to work.

Weed fiddled with his knife and tried to figure out something.

Perhaps the sculpture would show the peak of his current skills. Weed believed that he would succeed even though he was making a rock sculpture for the first time. He didn't want to rush and mess up the sculpture. Novices would often immediately rush to work,

and then mess up, resulting in penalties.

Mapan waited a moment and said:

"What are you going to make?"

"Uhhh..."

"Still don't know yourself?"

Weed gave a silent nod. Mapan hit the nail on the head. We need to do something that will help me raise my fishing level. Just what is it?

"Maybe we can make a huge bait?" Weed seriously considered the suggestion but decided against it. No, that's stupid; the statue would just scare the fish.

"We need to make a sculpture associated with the sea, something good which attracts fish ... Yes, a woman. A Mermaid!"

The well-known fairy tale of a mermaid:

Once there was a mermaid princess that lived her whole life under water, and when she was 15, she went above water for the first time in her life. At that moment, she saw a ship with a young prince on board. Surprisingly, she fell in love at first sight and for several days accompanied the ship. But then there was a storm.

The ship began to sink, and the mermaid caught the unconscious prince and rescued him. When the prince woke he thought the temple girl saved him so he decided to marry her. Upon hearing this, the little mermaid in desperation turned to a dark witch, and got human legs in exchange for her beautiful voice. She went into the palace and tried to win the prince over but failed.

In despair she jumped out of a window into the sea and turned into sea foam. All the inhabitants of the sea bitterly mourned her death and often visited her resting place.

"Yes, a mermaid would be the best, and fish would swim to the location of the statue."

Weed worked hard carving with his knife. Recently he made sculptures of women by hand and so without further ado he again embodied the image of Seoyoon.

However, this time he would have to make changes.

"Everything below the belt should be a fish tail...bigger eyes, flowing hair... Hmm, I'll also have to make the top nude."

Weed stopped and appreciated the work done. The face appeared quite similar to Seoyoon. He was ashamed a little of making her naked. Internally, he opposed it; besides if she saw it, then he would be in trouble.

"Hmm, what should I do ... Ahh! I'll just remake an actress" Weed

began to recall well-known actresses and made changes to the sculpture. The face changed a lot, and the body became more curved."

Interested fishermen gathered around Weed.

"Oh! What is this?"

"A Sculpture. I've never seen a sculptor like him before."

"It's beautiful."

Fishing on the river was slow and boring, so strange events attracted many players. Weed, scrolling through images in his head, quickly cut out details in the sculpture. In the end, it turned out as a beautiful but sad girl with a baby face.

Weed made sure to make the sculpture young because, as in the legend the little mermaid was not a grown woman.

Tink!

You have finished the Sea Nymph SculptureThe outstanding work of a master engraver

Artistic value: 450.

Effects: The power of a water spirit will prevent the river from flooding for 10 years.

This effect cannot be combined with other sculptures.

" ... "

Weed lowered his hands.

The statue was supposed to help catch fish, and not give any extra effects.

A Water nymph "the daughter of the sea god, with a nice fish tail." Apparently a nymph and a mermaid was something similar, and this similarity played a cruel joke.

"You ..."

The fishermen condemned weed as they looked at the statue. For them, as solitary men they liked to watch the river as it carried couples away. And now there was a sculpture that would prevent floods for the next 10 years. Weed had become the enemy of most anglers.

"Honestly, I didn't intend for this" justified Weed as the fishermen closed in on him.

"Ah! I'll fix everything!"

In his situation, he had to act quickly. Weed turned toward the sculpture and shouted:

"Sculpture destruction!"

From the base of the sculpture, up-to-head, appeared a huge crack, and when it reached the top of the sculpture, it shattered into many small fragments.

You have used a skill: Sculpture destruction

Because of great regret you lose 1 Art stat and lose 20 fame.

A ratio of 1:2 of your art stat has been added to you dexterity for one day.

Sculpting Skill has risen by 0.2%

Even with the destruction of a sculpture it was one of the skills of a sculptor, so it gave experience points. Even more points than creating sculptures. But it could not be used more than once a day and decreased performance.

1800 points from his art stat was added to his dexterity.

Now he fished so quickly that his hands were a blur. However, his fishing rate was not affected, but it still looked impressive.

*

The Geomchis gripped their blades.

"Ohhh!"

"We got everything but the dragon!"

After a quick death, the Geomchis were full of determination again.

Revived, they appeared somewhere in the forest and Geomohochi, standing on a tree, calmly surveyed the surrounding area.

"Fifth, what you see?" the teacher anxiously asked

"I don't see anything."

"Geomsamchi, what about you?"

"I see ... a boy."

"A little boy! Does that mean there's a town nearby?" As the master jumped up so did all 500 of his students.

Frankly, they did not want to admit it, but they were lost. After fearlessly attacking the dragon, many of them died and were reborn somewhere to the south of Rosenheim. With their supplies long gone, the Geomchis resorted to forest barriers and rare game from hunting.

Rare because the group of 500 could not move quietly enough to catch animals off guard. And because none of them knew how to cook, they ate under cooked or burnt meat, making everyone sick.

"Bring him here."

"There he is."

Geomsamchi quickly ran forward and brought the boy.

The Geomchis, looking at the child could not help but cry.

"Ohhh!"

"How long has it been since we've seen people?"

"Finally we can go back to a village."

"And eat delicious bread. Yum-yum."

The master on behalf of his students asked the child:

"Is there is a village nearby?"

The child looked nervous and stuttered:

"Ye-y-y-y ... Yes, but who are these uncles?"

"Uncles!" The crowd quickly became rowdy.

"Why did you call us uncles!" "We're not even married. We are young!"

"And I am only 20!" There was a pained cry from the crowd.

The Geomchis responded very strongly to the boy's words, though, they should have been happy that they were not mistaken for robbers.

With the boy's words the Geomchis began to reflect on themselves.

"That's weird. I see strangers form parties and hunt together but we don't do that."

"Why don't we?"

"Yeah. Wherever we go, people scatter."

"Also in the fortress of Seraburg! When we went to the market, people avoided us."

"This reminds me, we've never hunted with women! If this continues, we will live a lonely life, and die forgotten as a lonely old fart!"

The Geomchis for the hundredth time shared the same experience. Then the boy fell on his knees.

"Please help me!"

"Huh?"

"My parents have been taken away by the evil giant! I left the village in order to find help. I beg you, please save them!"

Tink!

A Giant man has been kidnapping villagers.

The giant man "a type of monster related to the giants" torments the villagers around the clock. Abducted villagers have to cook, wash, clean, and collect food for the monster. In return for their work they are given very severe beatings. Kidnapped people often die quickly from exhaustion.

Save the boy's parents or they will die!

Reward: Black sword, and gratitude from the villagers

Failure: Not completed within: 10 days

The instructors and students looked expectantly at their master. For them, doing quests was like being an errand boy, so they always refused to accept quests.

But this time, the master smiled gently and said:

"We will save your parents."

"Master, don't we usually refuse? Geomdulchi asked.

"Well, usually we refuse quest for bringing or collecting things. But as warriors we should help those who are in trouble, that goes without saying"

the teacher answered firmly.

"Then we will also ..."

"Everyone take the quest. We're going to catch a giant."

With the words "first the sword," the students cheered.

"Wow!"

"A quest!"

"I can't believe we're doing a quest!"

It was a dream of all real warriors to help those in need and drive out monsters!

The Geomchis headed toward the giant. It was not difficult, since along the way were traces of the giant on the ground.

"Oh! That's big."

"Probably more than 3 meters in diameter."

"If his foot is this big, then how big is the body?"

When doing quests, regular players would first gather information and prepare in advance. However, the Geomchis stupidly went on ahead. Following the tracks they came across a huge cave as big as the dragon's cave they came across before.

At the sound of the Geomchis, a huge, but not very intelligent monster appeared. As the giant walked out of his cave it grew angry at the sight of uninvited guests.

Boom-boom-boom!

The giant man ran toward the Geomchis, and the ground shook as if there was an earthquake.

"Run!" Shouted the teacher.

They scattered harmoniously left and right.

Wham!

The huge foot of the giant left a deep mark on the spot where the Geomchis were standing.

"What is this..."

With his weight and feet as weapons, he was bound to kill some of the Geomchis.

The Giant, shouting, was jumping, trying to crush the Geomchis. However, they avoided the jumps and struck at his feet.

"Now, grab him!"

The first and second Geomchis smartly climbed onto the giant. The monster didn't like it, and started to wave his arms around to get rid of the pesky soldiers on the back of his head.

"Uhuu!"

The first three Geomchis, clutching the giant's hair and clothes avoided his attacks.

Meanwhile, down below, many blows were dealt on his foot.

Like a huge elephant being taken down by a swarm of ants, the giant lost its strength, staggered, and fell onto the ground.

Kwaahang!

"Victory!"

"All thanks to you, Master!"

While the Geomchis celebrated, a small boy appeared in the distance. He ran exhausted – looking at the men that were appearing from the cave. Embracing them, and telling them something while pointing to the Geomchis. Eventually he came up to the Geomchis.

"Thank you for saving my father and mother, uncle."

"Why...It's nothing."

"No, it is, as promised a reward."

You have completed the quest, Liberation the villagers from the giant's captivity.

The giant man, who lived in the mountains, caught and terrorized the villagers.

With his death, finally, comes peace.

Familiarity increased by 26

Relations with the village of Ulkyn has become friendly.

- Your level has risen

- Your level has risen

The boy bringing a sword much too heavy for him handed it to the master.

"Here, take it."

"Check item" the master quickly examined the sword, and found that it was much better than what they had at present.

"The rest of the swords are in the village. And our village is famous for medicinal herbs. In appreciation, we would like to give them to you, and if you want, you can sell them in the city for a good price."

The disciples were stunned that the boy did not disappoint them. They helped people in distress, increased their fame, while still training!

"Cheers!"

"OOOO! Now, let's keep going!"

Royal road gradually opened to the Geomchis.

Weed rose his fishing seriously.

"As long as I get an average fish, I will only eat fish."

He swallowed the fish whole, and with each new dish his determination grew stronger. Sometimes not wanting to waste time he ate the fish raw.

"Wow! Muck."

Weed kept on fishing only on the strength of his will and obstinacy.

He always liked to fight, collect items and get stronger. Which he could do indefinitely. Now however, what he was doing was nothing like that. Only a peaceful, leisurely fishing which didn't even make money, like his blacksmithing or tailoring skill. After all, if you catch a big and wonderful fish, it would be sold cheaply as food.

As the days passed his level rose to beginner level 9. More

precisely, to 97.6%.

While he was fishing, he was surprised to learn of the existence of the fish market.

And next to Weed was always the same person. Slender and tall, a young man named Zephyr. Weed later found out that the guy started fishing here since the opening of Royal Road.

He was sitting on the rocks and gazed longingly at the Bensa River. It was said that some of the girls fell in love with this mysterious silent figure.

It would have probably went on as usual, but then came Weed. When he arrived, the strongest fisherman on the river was just Zephyr. His fishing level was well above average. Therefore, Weed decided, and sat down with the best fisherman on the river.

At first Zephyr paid hardly any attention to him, but gradually he began to respond to Weed. And at some point began to compare fish.

The two men grimly watched the river.

Zephyr's float first went under water.

"Oh great, a big fish!" Shouting, he pulled his rod back. But the only thing that hung on his hook was just an old boot."

"Damn."

Frustrated Zephyr sat on a rock and had started to stick on new bait, when Weed's float went under water.

Weed carefully, but with great control, was pulling his prey out of the river. As if playing a game, Weed and the fish pulled on the line. Using a lot of force was bad. Sometimes you have to let go a little, sometimes on the contrary, spin. Fish were strong, and if you thoughtlessly pulled at the line, then it was possible to break the line.

With a little trouble, Weed pulled out of the river a large carp. It was a humongous fish, more than 45 centimetres. In the history of fishing in the Bensa River, that fish ranked among the top 10 largest fish ever caught.

Tink!

Your fishing level has risen to level 10 and has reached the intermediate stage.

Now you can use rods as weapons.

+25 water affinity

+2000 life, increased effect when cooking fish

the ability to catch specialty fish

+50% to the effects of fish bait

+3 to all stats,

+50 reputation

+30 endurance

+30 intelligence

+30 wisdom.

After so much of suffering, Weed, finally increased his fishing level.

Having achieved his goal, he began to slowly collect his things.

"While the focus on this is finally over" he thought to himself.

Weed set out to learn all the craft professions to master level. It was huge and demanding mission, which would take him more than one year.

But now with his stats increased Weed was pleased.

"Are you going?" Zephyr cautiously asked when he saw that Weed had begun to collect his belongings. His voice was full of regret.

"Yes, I must go."

"I just realized that we never spoke much ... And you ... you're probably older than me right?"

"Well if you ask, perhaps I am. Perhaps we'll even see each other again."

Weed left the Bensa River, and headed to the capital of the kingdom, Kroin, to sell his figurines, which he made while fishing.

Ding-dong!

He rang the bell on the door of the souvenir shop. The owner was at the counter alone.

"What leads you here?"

"I have come to sell some sculptures."

Weed put his products on the counter: figurines of vampires, wolves, the crown of Fargo and many others.

"Wow!" The shopkeeper could not hide his delight. "Excellent! I have never seen such excellent products. I cannot even imagine their value. Such depth, such a flight of thought in these statues ... and you happen to look at the wolf, when they made this statue?"

"Yes, I did."

"Were you hungry?"

Weed nodding played along:

"Yes, I had to go hungry for four days."

"Oh! Even so. I feel it, when I look into the eyes of a wolf, a living statue ..."

"Ohoho" Weed laughed heartily, with the shop owner's last words he offered a prepared fried fish.

"Oh, yes! While you evaluate my products, try this dish, I cooked it myself. Eat it for Health and quietly gaze at my statues."

"Why thank you. Maybe I will look for you in the future. I too, was at one time engaged in the work of a sculptor, but alas, I didn't have much talent, so I had to open the shop."

"I have only recently embarked on the path of a sculptor, and I still have a lot to learn. But my desire to sculpt does not lose to anyone. Consider me a novice sculptor and suggest any advice if you see any errors. I will be very grateful."

"Impossible."

Flattery! Gifts! Dedication!

To the people that have influence, it is better to be a little obsequious and friendly. Weed brought a simple dish, said a few kind words, and his relationship with the owner of the shop greatly improved. Who would not be pleased when praised!

But compliments should be used carefully, and one should be careful not to overpraise. Or else, his efforts would backfire. For example, if the shop keeper had really short legs, and if such a person were to say that he looked very tall, then the effect would be the opposite.

The shopkeeper would immediately notice the flattery and begin to think, what do you want from him. In order not to fail so miserably, you had to carefully select words for compliments. Look very good, or when laughing look honest. Therefore, choosing his words, it was necessary to consider them.

You can even use criticism. Take all tall men and criticize them:

"Growth means nothing. If you do not possess eyes enabling to see and appreciate beauty, you cannot even understand the nature of good works."

"Yes, you are right."

So, while the shopkeeper priced figurines, they traded with each other phrases and their friendship strengthened.

After exchanging pleasantries and evaluating the figurines, they moved on to the main point:

"How much would you give for them?"

Weed goal for the game never changed. Money, money, money and more time! He was ready to get out of his skin just to earn more money.

"For such a superb job, I will give you 3 gold per sculpture. Is that all right?"

"I'll sell them all" Weed replied without hesitation.

Recently, he stopped selling figurines to ordinary players. Even if you put in extra time and effort into you work, people would only pay something around 1 gold. But when you sell to a shop, it's

possible to get 2 or 3 gold.

Although if you figured how much time he spent on the creation of figurines, the payment would not cover even the cost of simple physical labor.

It was much more efficient to make money by hunting rather than selling statuettes.

Weed gratefully took the 245 gold.

"Maybe when my level rises, I can earn more. But until then I'll have to do this" he thought sadly.

Throwing the money into his backpack, he was about to leave.

"I see you have a talent for sculptural design. You see beautiful things and make them into sculptures" said the shopkeeper.

Considering that this was another compliment Weed was already heading toward the exit, but his next words made him change his mind.

"A Sculptor must feel the beauty of life, and I see it in you. Did you happen to hear about the master-sculptor Darone? I usually do not tell, but you have the gift of the sculptor, so I can trust you. Did you know that Darone lives in the town of Rega?

You have acquired information about the master-sculptor Darone.

Chapter 5: Shapeshifter Sculpture

Weed went to the slums of the city.

Built on a hill with terraced buildings, the house he was looking for was located somewhere on the outskirts of the fort. It was said that if you bought a house here, you could get a view of the whole castle. Here there were no shops or useful buildings.

The only reason Weed came here was because of Darone. As a sculptor, it was very important that he uncover all of the secrets of sculptural design. Therefore, he was damn lucky to find one of the masters so quickly.

"Even if he doesn't cling to fame, to live in a place like this..."

At first, when Weed heard of sculptural design he was skeptical. Now he really anticipated meeting a master engraver.

"Each engraving master has their own skills. If you learn all five techniques, you can learn a final skill. However, to fully utilize a profession was not something easy to do...."

If you remember how it all began, it was very strange. The story of how he became a sculptor and mastered it was incredible. First, he became friends with the instructor leading the training centre by beating a scarecrow day and night.

With his love of battle and contempt for sculptors, he established a friendly relation with him. Then, following the advice of his instructor, he went to the sage to find a profession.

After being deceived by the sage he became a Legendary Moonlight Sculptor at level 60. But that wasn't the end of it. He suffered through many hardships as a sculptor, but persevered and mastered several craft skills. Weed finally found Darone's house.

The house was surrounded by a fence, but he couldn't really call it one because of how shabby it was. Inside, there stood a middle-aged man.

"It seems that person is Darone."

As he went inside, he quietly watched Darone sculpt. Weed only saw him work for a brief time but he immediately recognized that he was a master. He didn't want to interfere but the fact that he was making a sculpture resulted in many questions. Darone was carving a middle-aged woman in a wide skirt.

While working, he would periodically stop and spit blood on the ground. Only after he finished did he look at Weed.

"You waited a long time. Engraver?"

"Yes."

"So, you found me ... It is necessary to realize your own skills. As

your soul changes, you develop different skills and create something that is entirely your own.. But still, I see you want to learn my secrets."

Weed understood what he meant but he couldn't even count the number of times when the engraving knife technique helped him. With the benefits of his other skills such as the sculptural life giving skill, he became excited.

"I want to learn!"

"Good. However, I don't just reveal my secrets to anyone. I must first check whether you are worthy to teach. Therefore, go and try to understand the souls of five living beings."

Tink!

Weed was confused.

Sculpting secrets went against common sense, 'the engraving knife technique', 'giving to sculptures' and now he had to copy the movements of five living things in order to penetrate their souls. He could not figure out what to do.

"Is this the general attitude of a sculptor when he gives a task?" he asked.

"What? You do not want to learn my secret? Are you rejecting my quest?"

Weed answered quickly.

"No. I really want to learn. Right now I'll go and repeat the movements of five creatures. Is that good enough?"

"Yes. But I do not know if you can ..."

You have accepted the quest.

Weed left the fortress.

"Five creatures...."

With that description, the criteria fitted any living creature.

"Then, I shouldn't choose a complex creature."

He looked around the castle. Running around the grounds were rabbits, squirrels, deer, and other animals of the beginning levels. The kinds of monsters beginners killed. He made up his mind. His first objective was to imitate a rabbit. Small rodents and deer were too fast, so his choice fell on a rabbit.

Crouching on the ground, he snuck up on a rabbit which was peacefully munching grass.

"....."

Although he did not want to, because of his indomitable will power, he began to imitate the bunny.

"Yum-yum."

Weed was on his knees chewing grass.

Because of his knowledge of herbs, he did not have to worry about eating poisonous plants. But to everyone else he looked very silly. The bunny apparently felt his eyes and hopped toward another location. Weed could do nothing but to squat jump after.

The rabbit moved in zigzags, and without warning changed speeds. Periodically he would stop, drink water, chew grass and watch him.

"What! Why is the rabbit so fast?"

You repeated the movement of the rabbit. Progress 0.6%

Fortunately, he repeated the movements correctly, but it was still unclear what this had to do with sculptural skills. In any case, Weed hopped after the rabbit, and his progress reached 35%.

However this was only the beginning, after the rabbit there were four other creatures. Running after the rabbit, Weed learned a lot about the bizarre behavior of rabbits.

First, the behavior of rabbits was very different than what Weed thought before. The rabbit washed his ears, marked his territory, and sometimes would jump to express its cheerful mood. Naturally so did its human counterpart.

The small, cute bunny was followed by a big and cruel person.

"The rabbit looks so tasty, if I could just get a bite...tasty."

But he did not hunt rabbits.

For a whole day, the only thing that went into his mouth was grass, and now just looking at the rabbit caused him to drool. In the whole continent of Versailles, this was the only rabbit that was spared from the hands of Weed.

You repeated the movement of the rabbit. Progress 84.2%

The more progress he made the slower it rose.

However in just 5 days he reached 80% and now was able to give them simple commands."Sit down. Stand up. Turn around. Side kick!"The rabbit rolled on the ground following Weed's commands.

"Rabbits ... When you know them better, you realize that they are very nice animals."

When his progress reached 99.8%, the bunny sat and looked toward the sky at the

moon. Then Weed did the same.

You have fully mastered the movement of the rabbit.

After the rabbit's turn was the deer's.Weed did not consider

himself a typical sculptor because he put all of his points in strength and dexterity. Regular players with the profession of a sculptor put all their points in art.

But Weed was stingy about putting points in art. Art was supposed to enhance the value of items he made, and increase the chance of creating a beautiful work, but that wasn't easily seen. As for strength and dexterity, he felt it made him stronger. That's why Weed developed his art stat passively through the work of his sculptures.

Now his art stat exceeded 800 points, and he had 505 points in dexterity, including bonuses, of course.

"If it's a deer I might be able to follow them!"

The deer calmly plucked leaves from the branches of trees, and suddenly as if frightened of something ran off. Weed could do nothing but go after him. Due to his high dexterity he would not be shaken off.

You repeated the movement of a deer. Progress 0.2%

After hopping around like a rabbit, chasing a deer was much more invigorating. Also the deer was a lot more elegant.

However, even here there were pitfalls. It suddenly dawned on Weed: "Deer run on four legs." But it was too late to change to a different animal; he got onto all fours and tried hard to keep up with the deer.

Mapan and Hwaryeong, after some transactions, headed to the town of Rega.

"Everything went smoothly all thanks to you, Hwaryeong."

"No, it's because of your skill as a merchant Mapan."

Mapan and Hwaryeong, sitting on a cart, were engaged in a friendly conversation. Trading consisted of buying and selling, between which took a long and boring journey. As a result, merchants made sure to make friends with the NPCs when they visited a town. So, if you weren't devoted, trading would be very boring.

As a merchant, Mapan could reduce the weight of traded goods, and increase the moving speed of vehicles. However, even with these buffs, journeys were long and boring.

Mapan and Hwaryeong generally talked to pass the time. This time, they began to talk about Weed.

"Oh, I wish I was there when Weed fought and defeated the Vampire Lord Tori with the help of the Order of Freya's Paladins."

"Yeah, not everyone can complete a B level quest. He even built an ice dragon in the northern continent."

Hwaryeong eyes sparkled.

She loved fairy tales and legends, and all of the stories about Weed completely delighted her. She was really impressed when she heard that Weed and Alveron - a Pope Candidate of the Order of Freya - set out to save the cursed paladins!

When they arrived in the ruins of the abandoned village, Weed and Alveron were weakened by the bitter cold and surrounded by monsters of overwhelming strength. Still, they persevered and gradually built up their strength.

While the quest was still in progress, Weed sculpted a gigantic ice dragon. When all of the cursed paladins outside of the castle were freed, Weed and his force stormed the Black Castle. There they defeated hordes of vampires, freed the innocent villagers and defeated the final boss Tori.

Inside Hwaryeong's head, all of these events played out as one epic movie. She saw earnest heroes in pain, struggling against the cold, fighting monsters and even the forces of nature itself. Hwaryeong's impression of the recount of Weed's quest was that it was an incredible and dangerous adventure. Mapan shrugged his shoulder.

"People talk about this now, but believe me. At first glance I saw

that he was a very special person. When he came down from the sky..."

As they shared small talk they neared the city gates, but then they encountered something odd. They found a large crowd watching something. It was unusual for so many people to be gathered on the plains because the city gates were still a couple of hours away.

Mapan and Hwaryeong looked at each other. After a long and tedious journey, they were very interested to know what was happening there.

"Shall we?" asked Hwaryeong.

"Yes. It is necessary to look."

Mapan stopped his cart, and they joined the crowd. Then they saw something that shocked them to the core.

Running across the field was a fox. Its lush, long tail swaying gently in deft movements. But they were not shocked by the tail. An unknown player was following the fox on all fours. When the fox jumped, so did the player.

When the fox tumbled, so did the player. Sometimes there was a difference in movement that was so small, if it wasn't for the player, they wouldn't have noticed.

"Wow, who is this? This is kind of weird."

Mapan began questioning a number of people standing around. They were not close enough to see the face of the player from where they were standing.

A little girl standing nearby started giggling: "That man? I don't know who he is, but I saw him imitate a bunny, a deer, a goblin, and now a fox. And with each imitation, he gets better and better." "There are really strange people these days ..."

And at that moment, the fox turned back. As he looked back Mapan and Hwaryeong saw the player's face.

"Oh!"

"Wow!"

It was Weed! Weed was imitating a fox.

Mapan and Hwaryeong gave each other a look, while everyone else watched excitedly, and pondered the situation.

Both of their faith in Weed was boundless, but sometimes he did some embarrassing things. Without saying a word, they turned back toward the vehicle. Completely ignoring Weed. Rabbits, deer, goblins, and now foxes. Weed mastered their behaviors. Now he looked for his last creature.

"Damn, this job takes a lot of time!"

Because rabbits, goblins, deer and foxes were beginner monsters, they were often killed. As a result, he had to spend a lot of time searching and redoing everything.

Therefore, Weed decided that the fifth animal would be something that no one would attack. He chose a horse. They were easy to find, and not far from town were pastures for horses. There, he ran hard on all fours and began imitating them. A horse is an animal that is born to run, so even with his high dexterity Weed had a hard time trying to keep up. If not for the fence enclosing the pasture, he could not do it. "This is the last one, if I just preserve a little more, I'll get to learn the secret of sculptural design."

You repeated the movements of the horse. Progress 12.1%

After a day he was only at 12%. Having developed a plan, Weed had a meal prepared with vegetables and special grass to make even more progress.

"You are what you eat. Therefore, by eating grass, I will learn about the horse much faster."

You repeated the movements of the horse. Progress 59.0%

You repeated the movements of the horse. Progress of 89.7%

You repeat the movements of the horse. Progress 95.9%

Two, three, four! The more time passed, the more progress he made. And finally:

You have fully mastered the movement of the horse.

Weed was filled with euphoria. Then he realized something...Clap-clap-clap!While imitating a deer, his movements were constrained and a little clumsy. Now he ran familiarly and comfortably.

Weed flew like the wind! And somehow he had the feeling that on the four legs he ran faster than two.

Tink!

You have mastered a special movement skill.

Quadruped Run. One of the skills of movement.

In use, you will be able to speed up by 60% more than usual.

However, it consumes health and mana.

When running against the wind your stamina consumption goes down by 30%.

When running with the wind, your speed is increased by an Additional 20%.

When running on certain terrains, speed is further enhanced by 80%.

- Stamina +5

- Resistance +5

- Dexterity +5

"Wow! Wow ..."His imitation of the animals turned into a skill that ran on 4 legs!

However, he didn't want to attract attention, and its use was a serious burden.

"Looks like I can't use this skill in front of people ..."

And yet, Weed smiled broadly. The fact that he followed the movements of the animals wasn't a secret to his friends.

"Nothing. They just will never know."

After completing the task, Weed went back to the castle. Of course, on two legs.

Again Darone was working on a sculpture of a middle-aged woman.

While he worked, Weed waited quietly and observed that the

sculpture was very similar to the old one."He's making the same sculpture again" said Weed, puzzled. At one time he mass produced figures: birds, people, and wolves. However, not a lot of experience for copies was given.

"And the face ... frankly it's ugly."

If you become a master sculptor, then you have the power to create a princess so beautiful even the gods would turn green with envy. However, the woman had a common face.

Darone finally finished and turned to Weed: "You completed my assignment?" "Yup. A rabbit, deer, goblin, fox and a horse. I repeated their movements."

"Nice work and you finished rather quickly. You have done well. Now, keep the image of these animals in mind and sculpt them. If you pass this simple test, then I'll tell you my secret."

"No problem."

Weed was experienced in making sculptures, from large to small, wolves to dragons.

"I remember making rabbit and foxes, I made a lot of them and sold them to other players."

Weed confidently began cutting away with his carving knife. However, for the first few minutes he felt something was wrong.

"What did I do wrong?"

All of his confidence evaporated. Weed stopped and began to seriously ponder what had gone wrong.

The figure in his hands was very different from his previous statues. In general, it was not surprising, since over time his sculptural skill increased. But there was something new. When he imitated the animals, he began to know them better.

Why rabbits have long ears and a short tail, and how a rabbit moves was now subconsciously taken into account in his work.

His figurine became more expressive, detailed and lively.

"Oho ho ..."

Before, he simply used to copy an image he had in his head, but now he could make a sad figure of a rabbit, and a joyful one.

Even a rabbit chewing grass, first tearing, and then biting. Or a rabbit running away from predators.

In general, now Weed could highlight the nuances of life of a white bunny. When he repeated the movements of a goblin, he felt a little resentment.

Now working on the figure, Weed began thinking, trying to understand its soul. As well as working on the figure of a horse, he recalled the endless fields.

Weed was surprised at how comfortable and interesting his work became. It felt like he was spending time with friends. When Weed finished 5th figure.

Ding!

A grand piece!

You have completed the five figurines of animals.

Small, but very complex sculptures. They reflect the work of a real master and therefore contain great artistic value.

The sculpture causes joy and delight to all who see it

Artistic value: 460

Effects:

Health and mana regeneration increased by 6% during the day.

Increases affinity towards animals.

Resistance to fire magic + 15%. (excess heat in the body and be released through your ears)

Can detect any entry level traps.

Leadership + 25

Intellect +10

+10% Movement speed

These effects are not compatible with other statues.

Number of grand pieces made: 4

Sculptural skill increased.

Weed clenched fists.

Several times he made 'fine pieces' and even created a 'master piece' when he made the ice dragon. However this was the first time he created a 'grand piece' out of a small sculpture.

"In addition to these effects ..."

Usually his sculptures increased the amount of health and mana you had, but this was the first time he had a sculpture increase affinity.

"A rabbit, deer, goblin, fox, and horse. The features of these animals appearing in effect."

Up to this point, he only thought that large sculptures were valuable. But now he saw that even small sculptures could give the same or even better effects.

The possibilities for an engraver were huge. Darone looked at the figurines and nodded. "Love for sculptures makes your work even more vibrant and beautiful. You've passed my test perfectly."

You have completed the quest Understanding a Sculpture.

Before you would cut out the form of the animal. But with sculptural understanding, it is possible to show the soul of the being displayed. Love for animals, and the desire to learn, are one of the main qualities of a sculptor.

Rewarded: secret skill!

Learn from Darone directly.

Once Weed finished the message, Darone continued.

"The secret is nothing special. All I do is love my work. I don't use any special techniques or rules when creating sculptures. I just devote my heart to it. And of course when you do, the sculpture is bound to become something special. That is the secret of a sculptor."

"That's it?"

"The understanding of what you're creating, is my secret, and there's one more thing I would like to teach you, it's a skill only for those who understand sculpture...cough cough" Darone coughed and spat out a new batch of blood.

"Are you okay?" Weed asked anxiously.

"Ugh, I cannot say that all is well. Time is running out, and I still have to create 300 sculptures. I would, at minimum, want to fulfil the orders I've received, and then I can leave this world with a peace of mind. Will you work with me for a week? By working with me, you can gain a better understanding of my secrets."

Tink!

Darone's orders.

For a whole week, you will have to follow Darone's orders. This will help you, as a sculptor to make living sculptures in the future. This is required to fully understand his secret skill.

Difficulty: Profession quest

Reward: Experience gained at this time is multiplied by two.

Quest Limit: The quest will result in failure if you do not meet the deadline. Your fame will be reduced and you will have to pay a fine.

Weed did not hesitate. Naturally he would be repelled by the time limit and decrease in fame, but a secret skill was at stake. Besides, there was another reason. Ever since he created the ice dragon, his sculpting was at intermediate 6, and hasn't raised much since then.

This time, he had a lot more experience, and with a little more effort he could reach intermediate 7.

"Yes, and it's hard to get experience. This looks like a good opportunity,"

After working for a week with Darone, Weed could significantly increase his sculptural skill. Besides, because he was working on an order he didn't have to worry about what to create.

"Decide what you're going to do." Darone said as he handed Weed a sheet with a list of orders.

300 sculptures. Of course, among them some were difficult, the ones that required deep thought. Weed could only take the simple orders, but then his ambition flared.

"It's not easy to have fun. I can't learn much if I take the simple orders. Now I'm prepared to suffer..."

He decided to make 30 sculptures a day resulting in 210 by the end of the week. Morning, afternoon, and evening.

"If I work without rest, everything should work out."

The figures on the bow.

A fleet, floating on smooth waves, under white sails far, far away from the sun.

A customer highly requested a dolphin sculpture.

His orders didn't vary much. He only needed to do a little work, and on success, he received compensation in the form of experience. True, there were some difficulties. A sculpture had to meet the requirements of the customer.

For Weed, who was used to working as he liked, at first had difficulties. But over the time, he got used to it and easily understood what the customer wanted. On the first day he only made 15 sculptures, the second 24, and then the third day 35.

Taking orders, chatting, and listening to stories, Weed became friends with Darone.

"As a young man I met a woman and fell in love with her" said the master.

"All my life I only had one talent, so I decided to be a sculptor."

"That's nice."

"However, she soon left the world, and I couldn't accept it. After her death, she lived on in my memory, so I sculpted her. Creating sculptures isn't an easy job. It's not enough to see and create an

object. You need to put your soul into the job, just as I put my love when I sculpt her."

Thus, while working, there were leisurely conversations.

A week flew by. And Weed just barely managed to complete the entire order and reached intermediate level 7

Tink!

You have completed the task Darone's Orders.

All throughout his life, he carved a sculpture of a woman. His sculptures were full of love and life. By sharing his skills with a novice sculptor, he can now safely and happily leave this world.

- Your sculpting skill rose.
 - You have mastered a new skill: 'Sculptural Shapeshifting'
 - You have mastered a new passive skill: 'Sculptural Comprehension.'
-

Weed immediately checked his new skills."Open Skill info. Sculpture Shapeshifting. Sculptural Comprehension!"

Sculptural Shapeshifting:

A technique created by Engraving Master Darone, which is known to very few people.

When you create sculptures you can change your body into the form of the sculpture.

Requirements:

- Technique can only be used only after mastering the skill of Sculptural Comprehension.
- 2000 mana and 500 or more in Art

WARNING!

During the transformation into another person or creature you change only the appearance and physique, your stats and level remain the same. If selected for the conversion of a huge creature, you will need a certain amount of strength and health.

Sculptural Comprehension 1 (0%)

The better you understand the object, the greater your chance of creating higher quality works.

As skill level goes up, additional effect of Sculptural Shapeshifting will be added.

Beginner: Adds 10% to the effect of transformation. Can only change into earthbound races.

Intermediate: Adds 20% to effect of transformation. Can now change into flying creatures. However, you must learn how to fly.

Advanced: Adds 30% to the effect of transformation. Can transform into colossal creatures.

And so, Weed learned another secret of sculpting."Sculptural Shapeshifting ...

Because his level and stats would remain the same, it was hard to tell if it was worth turning into powerful monster.

For example, if you turn into a dragon, you cannot use its absolute power. Yet still, you would have to control its body, which would be difficult to do. Not being able to take normal steps,

you would become an easy target even to non-combat professions.

On the other hand, if Weed shape-shifted into a rabbit, he would be a cute monster rabbit in the level 200 range. Another plus would be that it was a very useful skill in understanding sculptures.

"Kulrok!"

Darone crouched again and coughed up more blood. He gave it his all and was about to depart from the world.

"You ... I have a personal request for you."

"I'm listening."

"Could you support me while I finish the sculpture? I don't have much time left ..."

"I'll help."

Weed stayed for one more day, to take care of Darone.

Master put his whole soul into the last sculpture. Towards the end of the day his cough did not leave him even for a minute and the earth was red with his blood. Finally he finished his last sculpture. It was a middle-aged woman. The one he loved.

Putting aside his engraving knife, Darone painfully said:

"Well, that's all. Go and try out several skills. Do not idle. A Moonlight Sculptor only grows with increasing experiences."

"Yes, I'll do that."

"I'm proud that I was able to pass on my secret to a Legendary Moonlight Sculptor. However do you know why your profession is different from a normal moonlight sculptor?"

"No, I do not know."

Weed really didn't know. Even after a long search on the internet, he couldn't find a difference between a legendary moonlight sculptor, and a moonlight sculptor.

"Most professions are passed on from teacher to student. Secrets of a master onto the hands of a beginner. So, once upon a time there lived a king who united the entire continent. A knight who called himself the best. A merchant who made a great fortune and others... Only one of them said that they were legendary...."

"So ... it's a good profession?"

Weed thought his profession was a scam.

Even now he thought of changing jobs, but he could not forget

the hype and hope in his heart that the profession is unique.

"A legend is a legend, nothing more ..." Darone said quietly.

"....."

"You bring your profession glory; your profession does not bring glory to you ..."

"....."

Money, not glory! That was what Weed sought. Therefore the words of the master brought him into confusion.

"That's the twist. So, a legendary moonlight sculptor is no different ..."

It would have been better if Weed did not know that!

He would rather at least have some hope, thinking that his legendary profession was something better than an ordinary profession.

"Sarah ...?" said Darone.

Staring upwards, he drew his last breath and disappeared in a flash of light.

At the spot where he died, he left a small wooden sculpture...

"A sculpture.... Only people who really loved the world would leave behind a sculpture..."

Only now, after the past few weeks of training did Weed begin to realize what kind of profession he chose and which direction he had to go.

Just being a sculptor is not enough, you need to invest your heart into it. Even the smallest fox has its own soul. And it can only be captured by a true master. Weed took out a wooden block, and began to work on a new sculpture. After all, he was the one that saw the final hours of the Engraving Master Darone. And who, if not his very student would have his image in his memory.

Ding!

A masterpiece! You have completed a sculpture of Darone.

The sculpture, made by a devoted disciple, radiates love, like his master. Although he left the world, a part of his soul will always remain.

Artistic value: 2300

Special Effects:

- health regeneration increased by 50% for a day
- Resistance to magic 40%
- Vitality increased by 45%
- All stats +10
- In areas where the sculpture is visible, there will be peace

These effects are not compatible with other sculptures.

Number of masterpieces created: 2

Sculptural skill has reached intermediate level 8.

This allows you to create more detailed and delicate work.

Handicraft skill has reached intermediate level 9.

The effects of crafts skills are increased by 5%

Sculptural Comprehension has reached beginner level 4.

The more knowledge and love of a sculpture, the better effects a sculpture will have.

- Fame + 1350

- Art + 79

- Endurance + 3

- Stamina + 3

- Leadership + 5

- In exchange for creating a masterpiece

All stats + 1 point

Translator's Note

Volume 1 Chapter 9

Some of you may not realized, but the wooden statue dropped by

Darone is really important.

"Rodriguez handed Weed a wooden statue that fitted in his palm. It was shaped like an imperial knight.

"What is this?" Weed asked.

"It is the legacy of Geihar von Arpen the Magnificent. My family used to serve in the Imperial Family of the Arpenian Empire. The blood, and obligation accompanying it has flowed in my family. I am the one to take the task for this generation. Now that I hand it to you, I am finally liberated from the reins,"

Rodriguez said.

"But what is this statue for?"

Weed had already received a wooden statue of a different shape when he carried out Zahab's Moonlight Sculptor quest.

"I do not know the secret of this wooden statue, either," Rodriguez said. "The myth has it that there have been five masters in sculptural art on the Continent. Of course, it is only an ancient myth, for they came and went like the wind. They are known to leave their own crafts in their legacies, so I surmise that this statue is probably one of them. According to the myth, if you succeeded in collecting all five of the statues, and solve the puzzles arising from them, the ultimate secret of sculptural art will appear."

Chapter 6: Siege Of Ohdein Castle

Weed left Rega in full excitement.

"It has been a long time since I've fought."

He felt that he lost his sense of combat. Usually, he fought against difficult and dangerous monsters, but for the last few months he had been developing his craft skills. Combat was like walking on a tightrope. Against difficult and dangerous monsters, with only one slip you would fall.

"Maybe I'll die alone and forgotten..."

He felt weak. Perhaps his source of fear was the fact that while he developed his crafting skills, everyone else was out hunting. It had been several months since he returned to the Order of Freya, and the last time he gained a level was the 9 levels he gained then.

Sometimes he would get whispers from Pale, saying he passed level 190. With Surka, Irene and Romuna having about the same levels. Even Mapan reached level 160, and Hwaryeong reached level 210.

Everyone moved forward, but Weed stood still. Though he cannot say he did nothing. During these past months, Weed had come a long way. His level didn't increase, but his stats did, and he was able to learn a secret skill.

*

"Oh my God!"

"I'm going to die."

At the sight of a monster they rushed into battle. Even against stronger monsters the Geomchis didn't hesitate.

Their goal was to get stronger.

Striking quickly, they confused the wolf. Then, by maintaining pressure and attacking from different angles, they took it down.

The more they played the more they became recognized as 'A group of Crazy Men'.

Five hundred players led by the first five Geomchis.

"Um... Master?"

"What is it, Geomchi2?"

"It's about Weed."

The Geomchis didn't often whisper to Weed, because they felt uncomfortable distracting the affairs of a man who did so much for them. However, Geomdulchi and Geomsetchi continued to interact with Weed.

For one reason:

Information was power!

After all, if you knew more than others you could stand in front of the master; find tasty food, know which monsters dropped good loot, and much more. The two of them even learned cooking, all in order to be useful to their idol, their master, who even now surprised them.

The master swung his sword as if it was the most natural thing to do in the world. It was aimed perfectly, and the wolf could do nothing to avoid the sword! The disciples became spellbound when watching their master fight.

"I know he's a master swordsman, but..."

"I know, he's incredible."

So everyone went out of their way just to please their master.

Geomdulchi carefully continued.

"Weed has completed his objective and is going on hunt."

"Well, I want to see him fight. Indeed a man can only be assessed when he goes into battle with a strong opponent."

"But he hasn't fought for a long time. Isn't that right?"

"Yeah," said another Geomchi.

"After such a long time, do you think he has forgotten how to fight?"

"Well, what..."

Oho-ho, their last words amused the master.

"What's so funny, after such a long time, your skills are bound to dull."

"Geomchi2."

"Yes, master?"

"Predators do not forget how to hunt. Whether to hunt as a cat or a lion will be their call."

"Well...I guess that's true, master."

While he agreed verbally, in his heart he thought different. Even outstanding athletes, after a long break became dull.

"And warriors, when they sheath their blades for some time they will know."

"What?" said Geomd; he hadn't been paying attention to his master.

"We must be able to separate ourselves from the blade. To achieve our goal we must not rely on drugs, or guns in our case. Learn to set aside the sword, and in your mind, continue to practice. That is one of the main methods of training."

*

Many people in Fort Ohdein were conducting business.

"Selling supplies!"

"Give everything your best. Hold down the fort, and destroy the Balkans guild."

"Reflect all of their attacks, and do not give them an inch!"

An alliance of guilds was assembled at Fort Ohdein.

Originally, the Oasis Guild, Prosperity Guild, and the Wings of May Guild were allies and they captured the fort together.

However, because the fort was of immense value, the Prosperity Guild betrayed its allies.

The other two guilds tried to negotiate but nothing happened.

The Oasis Guild consisted mainly of mercenaries who bickered about their loss, and scattered. But The Wings of May Guild, vowed for revenge as they left the alliance.

In the Balkans Guild, the guild master was sharpening a knife.

"We have to recover what was stolen from us!" shouted the guild leader.

They had already assembled several times and tried to take down the fort, but only suffered defeat after defeat. Now everything had changed. Overcome with anger The Wings of May joined an alliance with the Balkans. So now their forces outnumbered their enemy.

The fort was located on the border between Ledern Kingdom and the British Confederation. Many traders passed through its gates each day and left money in the pockets of the owner of the fortress.

Both sides had gathered a lot of people, but no one could predict what would be the result.

All attention was fixated on the fort.

There was still two hours before the siege.

The Balkans Guild slowly gathered around the fortress. Inside, the defenders were also busy.

"Their army has arrived."

"Second corps has gathered. Waiting for orders."

"The third corps is in position."

"Fourth corps ready to go."

The Prosperity Guild was divided into four corps each with 3000 men. The main force defended the walls and was dedicated to fight. The second force guarded the gate in the event of its compromise. The third force consisted of archers and mages. They supported the rear and were located on the towers. The last corps was responsible for supplies and consisted mainly of fresh recruits.

Also at the fort were many defending NPCs. They weren't happy about the war, but in general, no one cared about their opinions. The guild master of the Prosperity Guild thought of only one thing,

victory. If they lost the fortress, they would lose everything. Therefore, they were desperate and recruited a lot of mercenaries with compensations three times what the Balkans Guild offered.

Many of the mercenaries were gathered in the back of the fort.

"As expected, our job is to wait. Once the battle reaches a turning point we'll move in. Does anyone have any questions?"

After Brine's last words, one of the generals of the Prosperity Guild, there was only the sound of clanking armor and weapons. Mercenaries checked their weapons and slowly gazed at the walls.

"This is a rare sight. Look at all these soldiers."

"Look at that. A flying Wizard."

"Since there are so many people, the battle will be fierce..."

"The Balkans have a grudge against everyone defending the castle and that includes us."

"So that means we all have a higher chance of dying?"

As they waited, the soldiers talked.

The Prosperity guild promised each of them 10 gold for

participating, 5 more gold per kill! And 20 gold if they stayed alive! True, the last two only applied if they won. But many soldiers actually gathered not just for money but for the lull of battle.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

There somewhere behind the walls of the fortress, drums and horns sounded.

"They're coming."

Wizards and archers took position, while below them stood the mercenaries.

The ground started to shake as a large number of people marched.

"Iron Cross Knights, defend the fort against the Balkans!"

"The enemy is coming!"

"That's it, it has begun!"

Mercenaries jumped from their seats and gave a shout.

"Urrraaaaa!"

"Kill them all!"

"Defend the fort, don't give in to the invaders!"

The mercenaries, hearing the sounds of drums and horns shouted loudly and happily shook arms. They were all excited but there was one man who continued to sit. Theodore went up and approached him.

"It looks like you're scared. Don't worry, it's nothing. Everyone gets scared their first time," he said confidently.

Theodore was an experienced soldier who had faced many battles. So he tried to calm newcomers to demonstrate his superiority.

"Oh it's starting?" the bewildered newcomer said, looking around.

"Yes, wait, are you making something, a doll?"

Theodore leaned over and looked closer at what he was making. It appeared he was making a butterfly from a branch cut from a tree in the fort.

The Iron Cross Knights. They were a source of terror to their invaders. Now the situation changed, and they were fighting to retake the fort; nevertheless, there was none equal to the knights.

The knights stood on a hill at a distance and followed the general course of the battle. Everything would be decided in the second wave and that would be when the knights would enter.

The guild master of the Balkan Guild shouted out: "Soldiers! Companions! Here they come! We will retake our fort!"

With his words, hundreds of warriors moved in to attack. It was an incredible and menacing sight; everyone in the castle could feel the tremors they made.

"Fireball!"

"Aimed shot!"

The mages and archers on the walls fired at the invaders. However, the attacking army was so large it looked like pebbles being thrown into an ocean. In retaliation, spirits and golems were sent. Assassins having infiltrated the fort, cut the throats of magicians. Ladders and ropes filled the wall. Ballistae and trebuchets rained boulders and iron shells upon friends and foes. So far, all attempts on the fort were unsuccessful because of its strong defence. But now, with the support of new allies and enormous amounts of money, some spent on siege weapons, they finally gained enough strength to become a threat. All throughout the fort, fights broke out; it was a magnificent battle.

The mercenary troops under Brine joined the battle 4 hours later. The walls of the castle had already fallen to the Balkans. However,

the cost of their success was paid by the scores of soldiers' blood. Almost a third of their archers and NPCs were killed in combat. The Prosperity Guild had no regrets about spending money to protect Ohdein. But now, after much fighting their forces seemed equal.

The invading troops headed to the Training Hall, which was located next to the mercenary forces under Brine.

"Everybody, please stay where you are."

Even without words, everyone knew that there was nowhere to run. The mercenaries were at a stalemate. Their enemy was just ahead; therefore the soldiers menacingly brandished weapons, mostly swords, axes and spears, and waited for the enemy's attack.

Weed was among them.

"This is great, too."

He had already seen several battles for the fort on TV, but now he was personally involved. And it was great. Terrifying sounds came from all sides: the buzzing of deadly spells, and the screams of dying people. It was all real.

A cold sweat trickled down his back. Even when he played Continent of Magic, he never took part in a siege. This would be his first real experience. Only because of his desire to return to his sense of combat did Weed decide to plunge into the bloodiest battle

available. Even with his eyes closed he could feel killing intent.

When the mercenaries began to attack, he immediately covered his face with a wooden mask in the shape of a butterfly about to take off.

"Oh-ho. Time to meet your maker. Ahahaha! Power Attack!"

The warrior swung his wide blade...

Bam!

Weed easily repelled the sword. All worry gone, he only saw the enemy. Just by looking at his shoulders was enough to predict his attacks, and then counter.

"Engraving knife technique!"

A fatal blow has been struck!

Weed aimed at a critical point and his enemy fell lifeless to the ground.

"Uh... He killed Altona!"

"Revenge."

"Thunder Slash!"

"Triple Attack!"

The three of them, activating their skills, simultaneously attacked Weed.

Apparently, the victim was their friend. However, after examining their ability, you could see that they weren't even level 200.

With great hesitation, Weed lowered his sword and took all of the blows.

Bam-bam-bam!

Each strike flashed light, and finally disappeared into white mist. Graham leather armor! He polished it until it shined, and now enemy attacks were reflected into the air.

"Is he dead?"

"Where are his items!?"

Poor guys, they thought Weed had died, and their faces were all shining. However their feeling of security vanished as Weed appeared completely unharmed. Their smiles left their faces. At this point their enemy seemed like a devil. Weed smiled, his health exceeding 9000. When skills reached the intermediate stage, there were added bonuses! In addition, with his armor polished, and health gained from his fishing skill, he was practically invincible.

The damage he received didn't even reach 300 points.

"Weaker than I expected..."

Weed gave his opponents a disappointed look.

Enemies killed: 4.

If your side wins, you will receive additional rewards.

Also, along with an increase in fame, you can get a title.

"Engraving Knife technique!"

Weed attacked without hesitation. With each passing moment his opponents lost more and more health. There wasn't a big difference in level, but Weed's stats were far inflated for his level. In addition, with his armor polished and sword sharpened, he had a significant advantage over his opponents.

The three players could not withstand his attacks. A few moments later they fell dead to the ground.

Ding!

Weed went to the bodies of his enemies and found 1 item. As quickly as he massacred his enemies, he picked up their loot.

"Kiiya!"

Weed jumped from one opponent to another. Enemies swung swords at him and shot spells at him, but still they continued to die! Weed was not high leveled, but the average level of his enemies did not exceed 170, so they could not withstand him.

Top players on Royal Road didn't participate in sieges. After all, if they were mobbed and then killed, their penalty would be huge. So basically, only mercenaries, NPC soldiers, and guilds fought in large battles. On the other hand, among the mercenaries he faced some level 250 and higher. Those that did not care about the penalties. They were the real machines of death on the battlefield!

"Don't lose your head and die. Retreat!"

Weed was not afraid of soldiers at level 250. After all, he fought against stronger enemies, for example vampires. However, he had long understood that it was better to fight as a party.

So when he approached a strong opponent, Weed hid behind a strong ally until they engaged into battle. Then he quietly went off to kill other enemies.

"Engraving Knife Technique!"

Dishonest, and clever tricks! However, Weed did not feel any remorse. Like a hot knife on butter he cut one opponent down after another, reaching a total of 42 kills.

"Ahhh!"

"Everyone! Bring him down instead!"

Many players simultaneously attacked the masked soldier, but like everyone else, they could not oppose him. And they dropped more and more things for Weed to pick up.

With the mercenaries on defense, they had an overwhelming advantage.

The battle lasted all day. Again, blood was spilled at Fort Ohdein. This time the Prosperity Guild, defended the fort, whereas the

Balkans Guild attacked. Everybody discussed the fight, and most of the conversation revolved around one player. However, they didn't know that. Instead they thought there were 42 masked mercenaries. People that did not hesitate to use their comrades. Whirlwinds of death that left nothing, not even a single copper.

*

The Geomchis finally passed level 170. They laid waste to everything!

Thanks to their crazy pace, they leveled quickly. What was amazing was the fact that they started when Weed was level 180. Here were the results of real men!

They walked through the valleys and mountains in the southern kingdom of Rosenheim; sometimes they went to places that were never explored before. They gradually became famous, and naturally, there would be people who were jealous.

"There's something wrong with them."

"It's the famous mug, I hate crowds of players."

"Maybe I should kill them."

Halman and Margaux talked to each other, while Levi and Grand quietly sipped beer.

"Yeah, let's kill them and raise our levels."

"Let's split the loot fairly this time, currently I still don't have a breastplate."

"That's not a bad idea."

The Dwichigi Quartet!

They had tried to use Weed and Mapan, but instead killed themselves. With the Cloud Guild hunting them, they had no choice but to hide in Rosenheim. Since then, several months passed but their levels still haven't increased, because they hunted people instead of monsters.

"Sounds like fun. Come on, let's go!"

As always their shady business would be suggested by Gran.

"Kekekek"

"Hihihi"

Levi and Halman laughed.

Although they were "friends", there was always the risk of getting

betrayed. After all, they already experienced it several times! But still they would get back together.

"Killing alone is no fun."

"Yeah, it's better to kill while having a conversation."

"To me, there's nothing more fun than killing."

Respect and friendship were not words to describe the relationship the Quartet had. They gathered only because they wanted to have fun!

The Quartet blocked the road. It would be a burden for them to take on all 500 Geomchis so they targeted a group of 5 that was separated from the party. It turned out it was the first 5 Geomchis.

"Huh?"

"Who are you?"

The five of them had puzzled looks in their eyes. Gran smiled wickedly and drew his sword.

"Flaming Sword!"

Gran attacked without warning, and rushed forward.

"Master!"

"Watch out!"

The Second and third Geomchi's mouth opened in surprise. Their master leisurely stepped back, and drew his sword. Like flowing water he blocked the attack.

"Ha! Idiot!"

Gran's eyes were full of triumph. He was using a dangerous attack that exploded on impact.

However, the master just simply overcame the attack by deflecting it.

Tink!

As their blades crashed, his blade was deflected and the attack cut down a tree.

"What are you freaks?"

Up to this point Gran didn't know what to do. He had no idea it was possible to block the attack.

"Huh?"

Compared to Gran, the other 4 Geomchis' eyes were even wider. When leveling up they learned a few techniques, however the technique their master just used was thought to be useless. It was a technique that consists of first pinpointing the direction of the enemy attack and the amount of power behind it. Then diverting the force, and changing the flow of the attack causing it to miss. In addition, it used up 50 mana, and was hard to use. It didn't just require technique, you needed to advance quickly and calculate your position. Something only masters could do!

The master deflected the attack another 5 times.

"Oh...."

All the confidence Gran had disappeared.

The master asked quietly, "Who are you? A monster? Man? You're stronger than a death knight, so... do you drop better loot?"

Gran could not say a word. Somewhere he had made a serious mistake. Of course, he didn't stop, and tried swinging, but that was when the master easily countered him and began to attack.

Bam-bam!

"Hmm... Not dead yet?"

"Kiiya!"

Gran due to his high health and good armor stayed alive. His teammates didn't idle, they were moving to surprise attack the rest of the Geomchis.

"These guys are monsters too?"

"Students, now they come to us. We don't have to search anymore!"

"Look at the one on the left – oh my!"

Perhaps other players when realizing that they were facing the Dwichigi Quartet would run away because they didn't want to get a player kill status, but the Geomchis didn't even know about this concept. In a sense they were more brutal than the Quartet.

After a variety of wounds, the killers quickly died.

A few hours later the Quartet met again.

"What happened?"

"Ahh... I don't even want to think about what happened yesterday."

"So...you're not going to get revenge?"

The Quartet fell in a serious predicament. And as always Gran came up with an idea.

"No, we can't give up on revenge."

"I agree."

"But we aren't strong enough."

Levi showed weakness. After yesterday's events he didn't want to face them ever again.

"We're in a guild now. Let's get them to help."

For the Quartet, Rosenheim was like a haven. There hadn't been a large guild formed to police there, so crime flourished.

The Dwichigi Quartet had joined the Jamaica Guild . Because the guild very badly needed strong players, they accepted the Quartet.

The killers immediately contacted their friends in the guild. With lies, the Quartet managed to rally up 300 men.

"Kill them!"

"Wow!"

The Dwichigi Quartet with the support of 300 soldiers attack the Geomchis. They were warned in advance about their opponents' strengths so they had assassins sniping with crossbows.

"Ahh!"

"The enemy!"

Many of the Geomchis were killed in the first minutes of the surprise attack. Assassins attacked from behind and slit the throats of many. The survivors, standing back to back, began to block one attack after another.

"Damn, these guys are stronger than we thought."

"Everyone get back, use ranged attacks."

"Ice Storm!"

"Lightning Bolt!"

Many deadly spells flew toward the brave warriors. So far they had never encountered magic, so they were caught off guard. The massive attack dropped their health substantially.

"Damn!"

The Geomchis, not holding back their anger, cursed. If their enemy approached them, they wouldn't hesitate to rush in for an attack. But the enemy stood back, attacking from afar with a barrage of spells and arrows. And because the Geomchis didn't use shields their health began to decline rapidly.

"Even if we get taken down like dogs, we'll at least get one of you!"

Some of the students broke away from the group and rushed at the enemy, but the spells became concentrated and they quickly died.

"Oh my God..."

"Who are they? Why did they attack us?"

For the first time since they started, their faces were lodged with anger and despair. Sometimes they were dying of hunger, but now they were being killed by unknown players.

Geomdchi2 shouted: "Master get back!"

"I see. Fall back..."

"To where?"

"Into the woods! Everyone fall back into the forest. We'll have more cover there."

"Yes sir."

"Follow me."

The first and second swords went on to create an opening. In a wedge type formation, they fended off most arrows, but could not oppose the magic.

After suffering heavy losses, they managed to escape into the forest.

"We're alive!"

"How many of us are left?"

"A little more than 260, Master..."

"...Almost half of us have died."

The Geomchis sighed; all they could do now was rest and bandage their wounds. However, they were poor and didn't have many.

"Look! They're coming!"

While they rested their pursuers got closer.

"How did they find us?"

"Apparently they have some thieves or hunters. They can track us."

The Geomchis were gripped with frustration. As martial artists they could not cover their tracks. They had to run deeper into the forest. But now they were tired, and they were still constantly receiving ranged attacks.

"Geomdulchi, samchi, and everyone else!"

"Yes, Master."

"We're listening."

"Should we split up so that half of us can survive. Or will we fight!"

"Sir, we are men!"

"Let's show those bastards what we're made of!"

Now the Geomchis drastically changed their strategy. They didn't run, using the forest, they hid and used surprise attacks. However, their wounds were very heavy. Their enemies were using magic and even their priests were treated. Gradually, starting with the weakest, the students began to die, until only the instructors were left.

"Uhh, Master!"

"We're sorry, live on!"

When their health reached 0, in their final moments of life, they would look at the master.

In the end, only their master survived.

"..."

In the dojo, there was dead silence. The students and instructors were focused on one capsule. The one where their master lay. And now after some time Ahn Hyun-Do, their master came out.

"Master!"

Jeong Il-Hoon, Choi Jeong-Beom, Ma San Bohm, Lee Ying-Up and all the pupils were so tensed that their breath trembled. Usually it was in the nature of Ahn Hyun-Do to stay silent but then

he slowly said,

"He killed me...."

"...."

"He called himself Gran, and then slit my throat."

Everyone finally exhaled. The students and instructors were furious! To them Ahn Hyun-Do was their role model. Yes ,he had some eccentricities, but in swordsmanship he had no equal! Once upon a time, before coming to the school, they doubted his skill when they heard about it. But as they watched him fight, their doubts dissipated. Their idol, to die and be humiliated caused them to rage.

But Hyun-Do looking at their angry faces laughed.

"It's been 30 years."

"...?"

"I told Jean that it had been 30 years since I've lost a fight."

"But there were too many enemies!"

"No, Ile-hoon. The number of enemies and their level cannot

serve as an excuse. But now don't you think Royal Road has become more interesting?"

"Yes Master!"

The students and instructors, caught up in the answer instinctively.

Ahn Hyun-Do clenched his fist.

"It's perfect. We are like real soldiers and we should take on everything with all of our heart!"

The instructors and trainees became caught up.

"Ohh! It's true!"

"I like intense fights!"

"Let's repay their offence, a hundredfold."

However they froze as their master went up to do something.

He walked up to the blackboard and began to write in chalk the names.

Gran, Halman, Margaux, Levi and the Jamaica guild

And in front of each name he wrote – enemies!

He said with a smile, "Don't erase."

"We won."

Gran and the other members of the Quartet celebrated their victory. With lies, they got the Jamaica Guild to help and destroy the Geomchis. Now they went over dead bodies to divide the loot. They loved the taste of killing, but with no less pleasure they enjoyed splitting the loot. After all, with just a few days you could get valuable weapons and armor that took months to obtain.

"Let's see what they left."

With greedy looks Halman and Margaux were to first to search. But soon their faces contorted in surprise.

"Nothing..."

"No! It can't be!"

"There's nothing valuable!"

"This is ridiculous, look again!"

Gran and Levi carefully searched for items. However, they only found several swords in urgent need of repair and barley bread, lots of barley bread.

Chapter 7: Dungeon Hunting

"It's time to talk about the latest news on the continent of Versailles. We will introduce you to the events that occurred in Royal Road. And today we have a guest in the studio, you all know him, it's Joo-wan. How are you!?"

"Hello! Hye-min, your smile today is even more charming."

"Ho, ho, you already managed to come, no need to bother with compliments. Apparently, there is some important news today, right?"

"Yes, you're correct. Not that important, except your preference in taste, because I sense that in the morning you ate finely roasted pork..."

"Oh, what did you say? In the morning, roasted pork tastes best. But do I really smell?"

Joo-wan and Shin Hye-min. Although they quarrel and say random things at times, they are a pair of young reporters of news for the gaming channel, KMC Media. Lee Hyun slowly ate as he watched the news program.

'Often they are blunt, but it's better than CTS Media.'

Yes, the eternal problem of time management: seriously making

profit, it's hard to stay up to date with all of the events in the game. CTS Media invited to broadcast the most beautiful and famous actors, but they did not have the most important thing, innovation. In each episode, the actors focused on their image and boasted about their characters, which greatly annoyed the audience. Sometimes the show went so far off-field that it was unclear what they were talking about.

Compared to them, the news on KMC Media was much more convenient to watch. The excellently organized collection of information allows them to be surprisingly quick to recognize, and summarize main events in their news programs. The huge size of the Versailles continent gathered the vast number of players who to some extent, wanted to be up to date on the game.

"Now you will hear some wonderful news. Take a break from other issues for a few minutes. Now, at last in the Kingdom of Haven, the player Bad Ray received level 370, which was called the 'impenetrable wall.'"

"Wow! Superb!"

"Remember that Bad Ray is one of the leaders ranking among the highest-level players, and certainly you know of the nickname 'The Black Knight.' Inside the tower, the soldier finally reached level 370. The highest level in the game! Now, let's see how this happened."

Warriors of the tower.

A gathering place for the strongest warriors of Royal Road to compete. A knight in black armor wielding a black sword was fighting against a fierce barbarian. The barbarian, screaming in a fit of rage, inflicted a terrible blow with his two-handed sword. However, using foot techniques, the black knight easily avoided and deflected the enemy attacks.

The speed of high-level players defies description. Blades flashed with unimaginable speed. And when you take into account their equipment, you would have thought that it was a battle between a red and a black dragon. Still, the winner was immediately clear: the black knight was playing with his opponent! In the end, the dark player won the battle.

"You just said that the player Bad Ray won the fight and become the highest-level player in the game! Thanks to the victory over the warriors who guarded the tower, he reached level 370. I also would like to add that the technique which Bad Ray used in this fight has never been seen or used before!"

"Oh, ho, ho. Amazing!" Joo-wan was waving his arms and cried about. "However, Bad Ray must have been pushed, to have revealed such skills and technique?"

"What amazing insight! That's correct; Bad Ray is from the guild, Hermes. And as you may recall from our earlier news, Hermes took on the previous ruler of the kingdom of Haven, Iluina, and announced that they have chosen the path of a military dictatorship."

"That is, you mean to say that Haven declared war on all of the

United Kingdoms?"

"Yes. Apparently their recruitment of more forces boosted their confidence."

"Moreover, they have Bad Ray."

"Exactly that! Although the leader of the guild is a different player, Bad Ray is in fact the face of Hermes. Thus, from the showing of his increase in level from the tower's warriors, Bad Ray announced to the world the supremacy of his guild."

Later on, the news turned to other matters. They mentioned that somewhere far off, some guilds started a war against a powerful wizard in a newly discovered cave. On the mainland of Versailles, something was becoming commonplace: someone lost their items due to the outbreak of tornadoes and earthquakes. So if you are going to an unfamiliar area, you must be careful and try to gather more information to avoid the maelstrom.

'Level 370....'

The numbers refused to leave Lee Hyun's mind. In the Continent of Magic, he was the best player! However, even then, Lee Hyun did not realize the true value of that nickname. He only played for fun, slowly beating monsters and almost never talked to other players. When he gathered an especially numerous amount of items, he would visit a town and then sell them. Hence, the nickname of the 'Best' had a hollow ring to him. It was only when he decided to sell his character that he came to the realization of

such a title!

'Bad Ray... if you sell your account, how huge an amount of money will you make!?'

This was especially so, as the number of players in the Continent of Magic is not comparable to Royal Road. Over one hundred million people play Royal Road! Office workers, freelancers and many others used the game as a vacation spot. It is so popular!

While he improved his fishing skills, Weed saw many people like this. They came to the river Bensa to relax, away from family or work. Having picnics or sunbathing under the hot sun. Even if only level 50, their mood did not spoil.

The players do not hunt monsters for loot; instead, they just bought it all at once in the shops with real money. Often, they did so just to show off in front of their friends, as if they had come on vacation to a resort. In general, that was not far from the truth. With Royal Road, you did not have to take a leave of work for a week, or miss a weekend, as long as you have a capsule in your home.

Lee Hyun did not blame these players. On the contrary, he considered them as a different form of clientele. While there are such people in the game, anyone can make a little more.

Lee Hyun's thoughts all came back to Bad Ray. Everyone, from junior office workers and ending with company presidents played in Royal Road, so the cost of the highest-level character would be

astronomical!

However, in the case of Bad Ray, if he is not a fool, it is unlikely he would sell his account. Royal Road has only recently begun its triumphant run throughout the Earth, and according to experts, its popularity will last for at least another 10 years. So selling a character, the value of which will still grow further, would not just set you back in the game, it would also be a great folly.

"Yes, thank you On Joo-wan. Do you have any more news to report? You talked quite a bit about the continent of Versailles."

"Of course there is. If you talk about all the events that have occurred on the mainland, even 24 hours would not be enough. I wouldn't be surprised if something amazing occurred at this very moment."

"Really? Then don't hold out on us and quickly share something new!"

"Hye-min, do you like craft skills?"

"Hmm, yes I do."

"And if you would go into details...."

"Er... I like passionate people who can create something new with their own hands."

"Very good. Then you'll definitely enjoy this news. Just recently, a player has reached the intermediate level of Tailoring, Cooking, and Blacksmithing."

"Wow! That's great!"

Lee Hyun bowed in astonishment.

'Tailoring, blacksmithing and cooking – someone got them all up to intermediate?'

Lee Hyun went down that road, so he knew how hard it was to develop these skills to intermediate. So when he heard the news about another player doing this, he could not believe his ears.

'Well for cooking, it is just a long and tedious process. With tailoring and blacksmithing, if you use good materials you can quickly raise their level.... Though, thanks to trade, I'm raising the level of skills twice as fast.... Perhaps, it is possible that player did the same....'

But even through the use of trade, the development of all those skills, you still need to spend a huge amount of effort, materials and time. Lee Hyun found it hard to believe that someone else had mastered all three of these skills to the intermediate level.

Shin Hye-min made a pretty expression and eagerly asked

"Oh, so have you interviewed him? After all, if you find a player who has mastered those three skills to the intermediate level, he would definitely have a lot to say."

"No. Unfortunately, we found out about it too late...."

"I don't believe it! On Joo-wan couldn't get an interview?"

"Yeah. I was busy working on another story at the time, and to be honest, hearing of such a player, I couldn't believe it. Only when the site posted a few things that he did, I rushed to interview him; but, I was too late. The unknown player finally made clothes from prismatic fabric – a fabric of 1st class quality if you didn't know – and he disappeared into an unknown direction. The clothes he sold at the auction gained a lot of attention and was made into a video. Now it's displayed here on the screen."

The video screen of the studio was replaced with a major medieval city. Buildings made in the style of the Renaissance. Majestic temples and high towers, lots of two and three-story buildings buried in the midst of green gardens. Far ahead you could see the Colosseum, and many players wandering the streets as well as horses pulling carts.

In a shop you can see a player arguing with the owner, and in the middle of the spacious square, the auction was taking place.

A merchant wearing a suit offered for sale clothes that add seven different attributes. A lot of players gathered around the dealer in hope of buying something good. The price grew rapidly. Lee Hyun

knew the merchant auctioneer.

'Yes, that's Mapan. So the player that raised all three skills to intermediate, it was....'

On Joo-wan was speaking about Lee Hyun.

Interestingly, would he have fainted if only he know that Lee Hyun's fishing and sculptural skill was intermediate as well?

'Well I was not conducting the auction...'

He thought that the recording of the auction they showed on TV was excellent. Players were excited, crying out and colliding with each other for the desired items. With it, Shin Hye-min and On Joo-wan spurred the interest by adding sharp comments. After the completion of the video, the images of the items sold by Mapan appeared, including the price it was sold for, as well as the item description.

"Look Hye-min! Clothes made from prismatic cloth, made through intermediate tailoring.

"This is amazing!" On Joo-wan enviously pointed at the monitor behind him.

Rare Tunic made from prismatic cloth

Durability: 110/110. Defense: 55

A tunic of prismatic cloth stitched by a mid-level master. The master has put his soul in this piece of cloth. Even some monsters would hesitate in attacking it with their sword.

Requirements:

Level 150

Strength: 80

Dexterity: 80

Effects:

- Damage from arrows reduced by 85%.
- Fire does not affect the durability of the garment.
- Granted 20% probability that lightning spells do no damage.
- Blunt weapons cannot inflict a critical hit on you.

- Additional glory 100

- Art increased by 10

- Dexterity +10

Thanks the development of skills through trade, the item has incredibly high durability. The defense is also far superior to any other items made of good fabric. In addition, it has seven additional effects! With simple items, there may be two or three randomized effects, but often they are useless. But with this, when it is seven, and all of them are beneficial!

For unique items, Lee Hyun could only get a single unit. As with beautiful sculptures in the line of work of a sculptor, things do not always turn out that good as often with tailors.

"After the auction, the player did not return. When he appears, then I, On Joo-wan, will hasten to interview him, wherever he may be. I promise you that."

Lee Hyun glared at this narcissistic twit.

When you become famous, you have to be prepared for the appearance of both pros and cons in your life. For example, if you sell stuff, it's a plus. More people become interested in you and thus buy items; however, due to the fact that players start to follow

you, they naturally appear and interfere with hunting and quests.

That is why Lee Hyun had asked Mapan to hold the auction for him.

"Aww! It's a pity that we could not get an interview, but it's time to move on to the next story. On Joo-wan, do you have anything else?"

"Yes. Finally, I would like to talk about the siege of Fort Odhein. The Guild Prosperity defended the fort from the attempted invasion of the Guild Balkan, gaining another victory. As of this moment, there is no force in the region that could fight on equal terms with the Guild Prosperity. It can be assumed that for some time, it is only natural that the fortress will be at peace. The prices will increase by 70% due to the costs of the military operations and the repairs from the defense."

"Indeed, I can hear the noise even now from the disgruntled."

"It can't be helped. The taxes are set by those who own Odhein. Yet even with this price increase, I'm sure a lot of traders and hunters will continue to visit the castle. Now, let's see the video of the battle."

The screen changed once again.

The shot gave a bird's-eye view of the fierce battle between the guilds for Odhein fortress.

Apparently, a magician tried to make a recording as he flew across the sky, in an attempt to capture the entire scale of the battle. And it was a success.

A grand battle unfolded before the audience. Wave after wave of attacks hit the walls of the fortress, and the defenders slowly had to recede. It slightly seemed that the resistance was going to break.

But no such luck. The result of the battle was that the defenders won, the Guild Prosperity. It was all thanks to the fact that inside the fortress, they divided their forces and were successfully able to defend themselves throughout the day, until the siege couldn't last.

"In the battle involved...."

Lee Hyun, who had been watching the battle on the screen with interest, had turned off the TV. He took a shower and went to lie back in the capsule.

Lee Hyun logged into Royal Road.

He was still inside the walls of Odhein fortress. Once the siege was over, he immediately left the game, and therefore, went back to the same place, the entrance. A lot of people were wandering around the area. During the siege, ordinary players could not get inside the walls of the fortress, so now everyone was trying to catch up.

"Did you hear? They say that the player Bad Ray hit level 370!"

"Yeah, that Hermes guild is lucky."

"They also say that the number of players who visit the Kingdom of Haven have increased several times."

"Hmm. Somehow, maybe we should visit the Kingdom of Haven? What do you think?"

"Yeah, that would be interesting."

Many players discussed with interest, the latest news of Royal Road. For them, the game has become a world where they really lived. Bad Ray has also become a symbol of success for such people. He was revered as a king, or even world-wide celebrity! If there are clips from his battles, they are immediately downloaded to millions of gamers.

Just like in all other online games. The whole process of the game was based on a bunch of features and the fighting techniques of a player. It was important for people to be able to demonstrate their skill in combining abilities in order to fight against your opponent. Of course, the higher your skill, the less consistent with the natural laws of battle in the real world. But the game was fun to go into battles, because the further you go, the more powerful your enemies become and more difficult will be the monsters.

Therefore, high-level players garner great interest among ordinary players.

The players who were discussing Bad Ray said their farewells and went about their own businesses as Weed went to one of the retail stores.

"Looking for a priest. Above level 170."

"Paying for a long distance player! Mage or archer!"

"Buying a sword that is suitable for a player at level 210! Additional effects as well!"

The area was noisy again. After the battle, a lot of players returned to the normal lifestyles, gathering in groups, chatting and trading.

Weed now had a level of 230. Thanks to killing many players in the battle, he was able to get two new levels. But not everyone was as lucky; many players died and in contrast, lost experience and were hurrying themselves to catch up. Weed threw the ten points he received from the levels to dexterity as he entered the shop.

In the last few months, Weed became far too enthused with the development of his artisan skills, and therefore, he did not pay attention to the items that could be useful in battle. The shopkeeper was a strong type of NPC, with an ugly scar on his face that might have been the result of the last battle of the fortress. He

happily greeted the visitor.

"What are you looking for?"

"I need items, seasonings, herbs, and bandages."

"Good. Here are some items, medicines and herbs, as you can see."

Unlike other cities or castles, there was no separate food store. Therefore, food, herbs and other products were sold at the same place. However, there were a lot of shops that sold weapons and armor.

Red herb Zareta

Expentable: 2 silver

A herb that helps healing wounds.

Blue Cylon herb

Expendable: 4 silver

Herb that helps to restore wisdom.

As an ingredient in food, it increases the rate of mana regeneration.

This bloody battle for Odhein was not in vain, there were a lot of herbs in this shop, and some were even of very rare species. Weed bought 200 pieces of each herb, a whetstone, thread for sewing, bandages and food. It also didn't turn out that expensive. In fact, the prices at the fort used to be high, but in honor of the victory, the players who fought on the winning side will not get taxes in the shops or on goods for a week. A bonus for the winners of the bloodiest battle.

When Weed was finished, he left the walls of Odhein. His direction lay to the nearest cave, the cave of Basra!

A group of wizards were led by Sollon; in their flowing blue robes, he awaited the approach of the enemy.

"Return quickly, and get yourselves ready!" Sollon screamed. His voice was filled with tension and excitement. Yet, the squad just clicked their tongues.

'The guy's quite mad...'

'That's not all, he just wants to show off in front...'

However, this was the time to remain completely empty of thought. The thief Batu was being pursued by a detachment of enemy, and was approaching the position. The archers who saw the farthest provided the information on the force.

"The enemy is coming!"

"More than 40 people."

"Well done, Batu. Everyone, be ready to attack!"

By Sollon's orders, the magicians lined up and prepared spells. They then began to call out consistently.

"Attack! Billow out, pure flame of rage. Firestorm!"

A properly planned ambush had borne its first fruits. Under fire from many spells, the Basra monsters quickly weakened. But that was only the beginning; Sollon had the group begin a second series of attacks.

"Archers! Volley!"

The few archers let out a volume of fire that prevented the enemy from closing in on them. The monsters were slowly pushed back. Some of the players used stun arrows, which further slowed

the enemy's movement. During this time, the magicians prepared new spells and again did battle.

"Flames of my anger, reflect my feelings and become a wall in the way of my enemies. Wall of Fire!"

"Mother Earth! Stop the unworthy that trample thy space. Mud!"

The cave floor became slippery and the Basra soldiers began to fall as the wall of fire rolled onto them!

"AWWW... Ack!"

"Hot! My throat!"

But the battle was not yet over. Besides wizards, this battle involved close-combat. After two magical attacks and volleys, the monsters' health had decreased by more than 70%.

"Dance of Death!"

Amongst the fighting warriors, a girl flashed by with two daggers. Like a butterfly she flit between opponents and attacked the men of Basra. Vividly, she attracted the attention of males with her looks and graceful dance moves! It was Hwaryeong!

Where Hwaryeong flashed through with her dance, enemies got terrible wounds. In addition to it being a dance, 'Bubi-Bubi' is also

a battle dance.

"Beautiful."

"Awesome."

When Hwaryeong began her dance, Sollon and the wizards immediately forgot about the battle and admired her movements. The dance transformed Hwaryeong from a beautiful girl into a beautiful goddess. Sollon's squad had become a fan of this amazing beauty in no time at all.

"Hwaryeong, hold on!"

"Woah. She just winked at me."

"No, not at you, it was at me!"

"Gyaaaaa!"

Magicians threw off their mantles and went to blows with each other. Squad Leader Sollon had to separate them and bring back discipline, but the beauty of the girl had captivated his heart. While all stood and stared in awe at Hwaryeong, another newcomer to the squad, Zephyr did battle with the monsters.

"Iron Fishing!"

He used the iron line to wound and confound the enemy, only to leave them captive with a sweep of his Hades throw.

Zephyr, the militant fisherman.

When he approached a few enemies, he attacked with lightning movement as the lure was hooked on them and he threw them to Hades.

"Lure!"

Under the effect of his ability the monsters retreated from Basra, as Zephyr threw the fishing line to lure more captives. After all of the attacks of the squad, the Basra monsters had almost no health. So after a while, Zephyr and Hwaryeong put all the opponents to rest.

You got 3.49% experience.

In the one fight, Sollon and each member of his squad got 3.5% experience.

Hunting. Another reason why the Odhein fortress attracted so much attention from the various guilds. The area around the fort

was filled with different dungeons, and most of the monsters in those gave a lot of experience per kill. On the mainland of Versailles, you can find good hunting areas like Odhein, and bad where you get little experience, overly strong monsters, and worthless drops.

Sollon went to Hwaryeong and with a sugary-sweet voice, and told her:

"I saw a number of butterflies that have besotted me as they flew in front of my eyes. But the most beautiful one of all now stands before me, Hwaryeong."

"I want nothing like that."

"No. Don't be shy. You should be proud of your dance, Hwaryeong."

Yet she said nothing. This was not the first time she heard a praise similar to Sollon, and she remembered and knew what was coming next.

"Ah, remember, I told you this before. I am in the Guild Mavaros, our guild has the Basra cave. So if you join us, you can always get a lot of experience."

Almost all of the most attractive dungeons in Royal Road were in the possession of a guild. For the right to constantly catch the monsters and kill the boss in front of the cave, small local battles

occurred. After all, the owner of the dungeon accrues an additional 30% experience from killing the monsters!

Although, battling for a dungeon is very rare because of the complexly intricate relationships between all the guilds in Royal Road. For example, the Mavros guild participated in the battle of Fort Odhein, on the side of Prosperity, which won them the possession of the dungeon Basra. Then if someone tried to take possession of the dungeon, they would not only have to fight the Mavros guild, but other allies of Prosperity.

"Oh, sick!" Hwaryeong muttered unhappily to herself.

After Mapan established links to all the major cities of the kingdom, thus raising levels, he could travel safer and no longer needed Hwaryeong's protection. As a result, he kept applying gentle hints and she finally decided to travel independently. And so it happened, a few days of exploring the United Kingdoms of Briton, she went to the Basra instance. (instance = dungeon/event).

The location was great, the monsters gave a lot of experience, and she was left to fight for herself. Gradually, her dancing started to attract the attention of other players and sometime later they invited her to their group. So a few days later, she happened to be in Sollon's squad. In general, she was satisfied. Only now did it become difficult. Sollon did not want to let her go!

Hwaryeong loved to chat with new and interesting people, but because her dancing was very beautiful, she always found people like Sollon. If Hwaryeong joined with a different group, he would try his best to stop the hunt. Wedging himself inside the party,

wasting time by talking or even strike a critical blow with magic and specifically take Hwaryeong away.

In general, he behaved like a little shit, but because the Mavros guild had a big impact on them, no one complained. Sollon then changed tactics and decided to speak again.

"If you leave the squad Hwaryeong, you will have to drop the thought of hunting with my guild."

All would shun Hwaryeong. She had to hunt in Sollon's squad. The only consolation was that she managed to find common ground with the other newcomer in the squad, Zephyr. They often talked, and she liked the guy, though he was much younger than her, and he even listened to her when she spoke.

"Lightning, zigzag!"

"Sylph, bind their feet."

Sollon's squad fought the monsters of Basra. The cave was full of monsters, the squad didn't even have to move, they just waited till their thief, Batu would lure a new group of enemies into an ambush. A squad of archers and wizards! First to enter battle were the mages, who use spells to greatly reduce the opponents' health. As they regain mana and begin to produce new spells, the archers join the fray. They shell the monsters and slow down the movements as they wait for the mages' next attack.

Then towards the end of the battle, comes the melee, Hwaryeong and Zephyr.

In general, everything was planned out and kept the magicians attacking. Usually, other teams would take only two or three mages in the cave, as they had to work in a seriously confined space.

However, in Sollon's group, the number of magicians were 8!

Battle, rest, battle, rest.

After each fight with the monsters, Sollon had them take a break. This was not because they were tired of getting experience points; no, they waited until the magicians could recover mana and restart all over. So as of this moment.

"Look, the last monster dropped silver armor!"

"Woah!"

"You know what, let's give them to Hwaryeong?" Sollom exclaimed with excitement.

"Sure!"

"If that is what Sollon decides, then give it."

The players expressed joy in support of the decision of the party leader, but only on the outside.

Deep down, they were indignant.

'That's the same thing as before with the dancing broad.'

'Damn! And it was my turn to pick up an item...'

'Hrm. Now we have to give all of the best things to her?'

But no matter how irritated they were, the players still remained in Sollon's group. In Basra cave, it was difficult to find another party like this where they can receive such a lot of experience.

Like everyone else, Hwaryeong received her experience points, but since most of the work was carried out by the mages, she came out very discontent at the end.

'My experience is growing... but when can I hunt?'

In her doubt, she turned to one of the soldiers of the squad, Davron.

"If everything goes the way it has, and we do not use our abilities, we won't gain in strength, right?"

"Huh?" A lack of understanding spread on Davron's face, and then on reflection, she asked another question.

"What about our skills?"

"Well we need them, to, uh, improve."

"Right. And?"

"And we are hunting in a squad, we get new levels, but our abilities do not grow...."

It was noticeable that Hwaryeong was very worried, and Davron then asked in surprise.

"Of course, there are people like you Hwaryeong, who worry about development of skills, but in this case, shouldn't you gain more levels? First you need to level up, enter into a strong group and get experience"

"But in this case, we will eventually become weaker than the other players without developing our abilities..."

Hwaryeong just recently remembered how she traveled with Mapan, and defended the cart loaded with goods, by dancing. Sometimes she had to dance for several hours and significantly improve technique.

So when she saw the surprised look on Davron, she asked.

"So everybody does this? Right?"

"Of course. All the hunting you have been doing, what made you make that choice, Hwaryeong? First you need to quickly increase, then you can gradually develop in skill, hrm..."

Sollon's squad perfectly fitted Davron's statement. Everyone tried to increase their level as quickly as possible without paying a single bit of attention on their techniques. Since wizards are trained for attack power, then for the remainder, they only gain experience. But for magicians, all was not as rosy.

In a battle, they do not receive damage and therefore their growth in levels, without increasing defense and stamina, make them glass cannons. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the party only fights against weak enemies, even if many, it was of no use to the squad. It was all quiet and very haste-less fights.

Chapter 8: Weed's Hunt

Dungeon of Basra!

A place filled by numerous monsters, was located close to the kingdom's capital.

"A free spot in a party. Anyone willing to join? We have 30 people and promise a fast hunt."

"Looking for a skilled warrior."

"Selling healing herbs. Cheaper than in stores! Batch purchases are welcome!"

Weed, who just approached the cave of Basra, was watching players form parties. Some were joining the already existing parties, some were creating new ones. And all of them were hanging around the dungeon entrance.

In cave of Basra, monsters not only granted plentiful experience but dropped decent loot. Therefore its entrance was always crowded with players. Though no one dared to enter it alone which was way too dangerous.

"Do you want to join a party?"

Quietly standing Weed was approached by a few people accompanying a warrior with white plumage on his hat, who was the one to ask the question. Not waiting for an answer he continued:

"Excuse me, what are your level and profession? I see you have a sword so you must be some kind of fighter and one of our spots just got free, maybe you would join us?"

Weed slowly examined the man with the plumage. Not so much his looks as his equipment.

"Duke's helmet, weapons and armor of The British Confederation, items for level 180 and above. Costs 800 gold."

"Our group has 15 people. Everyone is of level 170 or higher. My name is Vintich, we are from Mavros Guild. So how about it, want to hunt together?"

Just the fact of them being from Mavros Guild would mean a positive response from any other player. Weed though slowly shook his head.'

"Sorry, but I'm not looking for group."

"Huh?"

"I'll manage myself."

" ... "

Followed by confused stares, Weed headed into the cave.

In the cave of Basra players were hunting from level 120 and up to 300. The dungeon had four floors, every next one having stronger monsters than the previous.

But it was not monster's strength that was driving off lone players, but their extremely annoying ability to steal items. In short, if you die - they rob you. Sometimes they would even go so far as to take your equipped armor.

As a result, after dying, player would not only lose experience but 3-4 times more items than usual. Therefore it took a certain amount of resolve to hunt in this dungeon. However, thieves of Basra were dropping good items, so it was never empty.

"He said it's on the 3rd floor."

Weed carefully slipped through 1st and 2nd floors, trying not to interfere with hunting parties too much.

"Gotta be careful if I don't want to become a pincushion after appearing too suddenly."

Once Weed decided to hunt, first thing he did was contacting

Mapan. But he had to refuse due to being too busy. As far as Weed knew, after selling items in the auction the merchant raised his level quite a bit and earned a lot of money, which he used to purchase a title and form a trading group under his name.

Instead, Mapan told where he could find Hwaryeong. It was then that Weed decided to come to caves of Basra to visit his friend.

Weed easily found Hwaryeong on the 3rd floor of the dungeon. She was hunting with a large party in the very centre of the dungeon. Gracefully dancing and striking monsters down, that girl was hard to miss.

Weed waited for the fight to finish and approached her.

"Hey, Hwaryeong, long time no see."

"Oh! Weed? Why are you here?"

"I decided to hunt and so I stopped by."

Hwaryeong warmly welcomed Weed as she was just starting to get bored. But then a player in a blue robe approached them from the depth of the cave.

"So, who's this man? - Asked Sollon after inspecting Weed from head to toe."

The way he said it, all the petty little soul of the mage was clearly visible on his face.

Barely holding her anger, Hwaryeong replied:

"This is my friend. His name is Weed. He's a sculptor."

"Oh! That's how it is!"

Not quite satisfied with that explanation, Sollon continued throwing suspicious glances:

"So you're friends? Or lovers even? And how long have you been hunting together?"

"We were introduced by a common friend. And we haven't hunted together yet. You got a problem?"

Hwaryeong's reply somewhat calmed Sollon.

"I see! Then there's no problem!"

And as if showing his good will he continued:

"Weed, maybe you will join our party? I don't have anything against your profession, but it must be hard to hunt alone with it."

"Yeah, Weed. Join us! - Hwaryeong exclaimed excitedly."

Actually, Weed wasn't going to join any parties. He just came to say hello and invite Hwaryeong to go hunting with him. However he could not just leave after seeing the eager expression on her face.

After joining the party and finishing one battle, he realized that he just had nothing to do. Knowing that Weed was a sculptor, Sollon wasn't giving him a chance to join the fight.

Instead Weed got plenty of time to talk to Hwaryeong on various topics. Certainly under constant supervision of lingering nearby Sollon.

Having grasped the situation, Weed openly stated:

"You are quite popular, Hwaryeong."

"That's not it, - said Hwaryeong with a smile, pretending that nothing's happening."

"My profession is dancer. Therefore I have high Charisma attribute. And also there's an 'Appearance' attribute."

"Charisma and Appearance?"

"Yeah, with an increase in charisma beauty increases. It can be

said that some kind of 'Glamour' appears. Brighter eyes, shiny skin."

"And then that 'Appearance' attribute is..."

"Well, that's what comes to mind first. Improved stature, cuter face, more elegant curves. But that only applies to dancers."

Weed recalled that he as well increased his Charisma attribute using belt of Deykram.

'I see, so that's what it does...'

This proved that the profession dancer isn't as simple as he used to think. Besides basic attributes, one has to improve something new.

Now it was clear why Sollon fell for Hwaryeong so hard.

"And as I'm a dancer, most of my efforts are spent on increasing Charisma and Appearance attributes."

"Then..."

"Exactly. My real face is somewhat plainer... Not like I have to tell you that, but I still did, just in case."

It was natural that initial in-game appearance was gradually changing. Usually it took a keen eye to see the difference. However because of her profession, in Hwaryeong's case changes were much more significant.

If you were to pay more attention to the woman, claiming that her looks do not depend on lighting, you'll notice that it's not true. Even most beautiful women who prefer not to use makeup will try to take the most advantageous position according to lighting.

Men are weak for beautiful women.

That is a rule!

But every rule has exceptions. And Weed was one!

'Woman equals money. Relationship with any woman revolves around money. If you spend it - you get love in return. I don't want a relationship like that...'

Weed had some twisted view on the matter. In his mind he compared beautiful girls to hippos feeding on money.

After 12 hours of hunting Sollon said:

"Ugh! Today was a really hard day. Well, let's meet again tomorrow. Thanks for the hard work."

Party members started to log out one by one.

Weed tightened his grip on the sword in anxiety. Finally! He was waiting for this moment.

'Well, so it's time to start?'

To begin with he took out a whetstone and sharpened his sword.

Shiiing-shiiing!

You have sharpened the sword!

Attack power increased by 14%.

His sword sharpening skill was at intermediate 4th level. He wasn't able to use it as often as, say, repair skill. Besides, if it was raining or he wasn't hunting sharpening effect would vanishing quickly. Therefore, the only times he got to use it was immediately before battles, when sharpening weapons for himself and his party mates.

"Done, next..."

Weed pulled out a soft cloth and thoroughly polished his armor, until it started to shine.

You polished armor!

Defence increased by 16%.

Chance to dodge increased by 2%.

Armor polishing was very similar to polishing. There weren't many opportunities to use it for prolonged periods, but its effect was good.

These two skills, greatly benefiting party's strength, usually were used by blacksmiths after being accepted into a party. If you were a blacksmith, but didn't raise these skills for some reason, you wouldn't be accepted in a party in most cases.

"Now food..."

Weed opted for a dish made of shrimps, with a romantic name 'Sea flowers'. Usually seafood in the game was quite expensive, but much to his surprise in Odein stronghold he managed to buy it

cheaper than in Rosenheim Kingdom. And not just because of absence of taxes, but because of it being conveniently located right on one of the major trade routes.

Nothing beats seafood when it comes to increasing Vitality and Life. And shrimps proved to be best among seafood!

To enhance dish's effect even further Weed prepared sweet maple syrup sauce and a salad out of potato, lettuce and béchamel.

Weed opened his mouth wide in anticipation.

He slowly peeled the shell off; after cooking, it acquired a golden tint and was easy to remove. There was only soft white shrimp meat left on the stick and it was all ready to be swallowed by Weed.

His will struggled with his urges.

His mouth wanted to take a bite, but hands didn't want to let go. Especially because it wasn't just a simple shrimp. Weed applied his sculpturing mastery to emphasize its beauty.

After slowly dipping shrimp in syrup sauce, under the influence of its aroma, Weed saw the glow of divine wings around the shrimp.

He even gave the dish a name: 'Angel-shrimp from heaven'!

He couldn't think of a more fitting name. The aroma was driving him crazy. Strong and delicious. No one would be able to endure its call.

Yummy!

In anticipation, Weed slowly stuck his tongue out and slowly mowed the shrimp towards his mouth...

When all the party members started logging out Hwaryeong immediately followed them. But that was just to get rid of Sollon. After waiting enough time for mage to leave, she logged back in.

As for Zephyr - once he recognized Weed, he didn't logged out at all. He just stepped aside and watched his former fishing rival.

Hwaryeong and Zephyr were closely watching as Weed was about to eat the lone shrimp.

'There's only one so there's no way I can ask him to share...'

However Hwaryeong didn't have the strength to hold back, so she loudly swallowed.

Deafening gulp broke Weed's concentration at the crucial point.

"Eh. I thought you logged out, Hwaryoung?"

"Ye-eah, - slowly replied the girl, staring intently at the shrimp."

And let out another gulp.

Hwaryeong wasn't asking to share. But here wide open eyes were staring at shrimp with such fascination that there was no need for words. She looked like it was the first time she saw food in many days.

Burning desire! Hunger! Craving!

'I don't want to get beat up over food!'

With a quiet sigh Weed handed over the shrimp. He didn't have a choice.

"If you want, then... this... for one gold..."

"I'll gladly accept!"

Hwaryeong bit the shrimp without the second thought. She didn't even get upset over last words of Weed, trying to minimize the loss in any possible way.

Yum!

Shrimp immediately disappeared in her mouth.

Actually, Hwaryeong wasn't so obsessed with food. Even in real life she was watching her waist and often was on a diet.

But the shrimp's aroma drove away her voice of reason. She had a feeling that if she won't eat it right now, she'll regret it for the rest of her life.

It could be said she was behaving like an addict at that time. All thanks to the ever increasing cooking skill of Weed.

After gleefully finishing the shrimp, Hwaryeong finally settled down. She wasn't regretting it one bit. Every piece of the shrimp was giving her heavenly pleasure.

'Now that I think about it, Mapan mentioned that if you stick to Weed, good things will be happening to you all the time! I got to taste such a delicacy! Yummy!'

Finally, she threw a regretful glance at the remaining head and tail of the shrimp that usually no one would eat. But if not for standing nearby Weed and Zephyr, she'd eat those with delight.

'Sorry, shrimp.'

Weed with regret took out another shrimp and started cooking it from the start. Shrimps were expensive so they couldn't be eaten as snacks.

For Weed they were representing investments.

Investments in fighting ability! Because effects of food were giving maximum possible boost to Mana, Life and some other attributes.

That's why he didn't regret spending money to buy 500 shrimps.

You are well-fed.

Life +400

Mana +400

Stamina +20

Art +15

Don't trust those who say hunger inspires artists.

Only artist with a full stomach can concentrate on his art instead of his hunger. Actually, food's effects varied depending on player's profession. Were Weed to be a cook, there'd be increase in vitality

and cooking, or better taste.

Weed started to gather his belongings. And of course he didn't forget to take his 1 gold from Hwaryeong.

"I'm going to continue the hunt, you with me, Hwaryeong?"

"Yeah, sure!"

To be honest, Weed never considered any other answer.

Her abilities as a dancer would come in handy as a trump card. Even though damage from her attacks wasn't that high, her movements were swift and monsters couldn't even scratch her. Besides, if you were in one party with Hwaryeong, your attributes would get a certain boost, contrary to monsters'.

You have created a party!

Weed brought up the control menu and invited Hwaryeong.

"Thanks! - exclaimed Hwaryeong in excitement and accepted the invitation."

Then she waved to Zephyr.

"Will you join?"

Fishermen nodded happily.

"I'm in if you're ok with me!"

Weed just nodded and sent an invitation to Zephyr. He didn't have anything in particular against it, there were plenty of monsters and therefore, experience, and some extra help would come in handy. Though he didn't quite understand why Zephyr didn't logout as everyone else.

"Then wait a bit, Hwaryeong. I'll make another dish for Zephyr and polish and sharpen your equipment. And repair too if there's a need."

It was a great opportunity to improve, though by a small margin, his blacksmithing, cooking and tailoring skills.

"Wow! Cool!"

"The defense increased, and fishing rod's attack too..."

Hwaryeong and Zephyr gave Weed a surprised look. They didn't expect a single man to be a master of so many trades. And it was

just a small step that separated an unskilled egghead from an omnipotent player.

"Thanks Weed! Now let's go find a party. We have 3 people and many parties will gladly accept us, or so I think, - joyfully said Hwaryeong, but in return Weed just slowly shook his head."

"There will be barely enough monsters for us three."

"Huh? What..."

"Do you honestly believe we can hunt in dungeon of Basra with just the three of us? - asked dumbfounded Zephyr. Unaware of it himself, he guessed right."

"Three of us will do fine. Though, I'm wrong. We have four. Come forth, Death Knight!"

Smoke started pouring from necklace on Weed's neck, and a moment later the death knight Van Hawk emerged from it.

It had been a while since he was summoned last time, so he was excited.

"You called me, master?"

"Yes."

Just one glance on his minion filled Weed with grief. Death knight was leeching off 20% of his experience. A lot of time had passed since Weed defeated and subjugated Van Hawk.

They fought through numerous battles and Van Hawk managed to greatly raise his level. Especially in the province of Morata, where Weed decided that the more vampires die - the better it is for the party, so he wasn't holding the monster back.

And Van Hawk used it to the fullest; at that time he was getting not just 20% of Weed's experience but all 100% for those he killed by himself. Because of that he managed to greatly surpass Weed and reach a level of 290.

"Damn monster! It's time you pay off for everything... - Weed immediately started grumbling."

But death knight had things to say too. After all he was getting experience not for sunbathing. He had to kill a lot of monsters, suffer through mockery of paladins and beatings of his master.

He had things to say, but he decided to remain silent for now.

History of dungeon of Basra wasn't a common knowledge for players. In the past a family of nobles used to live in the lands of Basra. It was strongly objecting to integration into British Confederacy, so they made a deal with the thieves guild and started to prepare an uprising. And the headquarter of that uprising was located here, in the dungeon of Basra.

After sending death knight to the front, Weed and his party descended to fourth level.

"There's no one at all here..." - said Zephyr in a barely audible voice.

And he wasn't wrong; as dungeon of Basra was highly popular among players, it was rare for them to hunt on 4th level. Monsters inhabiting it were too strong, with levels from 240 and higher.

Trembling in fear and barely moving his feet Zephyr didn't have a choice but to slowly follow Weed in hope that things will somehow work out.

'Amen! Why did I even come back! I could be relaxing at home right now...' - thought Hwaryeong.

'If we die here, we'll lose all the items... We're crazy to come here without a priest or paladins...'

Hwaryeong and Zephyr could barely hold back their fear and anger. Weed's behavior was confusing them. Even when 3rd floor hunting was hard enough, he dragged them to the 4th!

Therefore they followed behind the confidently pacing Weed and dark knight.

"Let's check his bag!"

"And turn out his pockets!"

"And raise a level! We need more power for new revolt!"

A group of thief-monsters jumped out from behind the corner. They were equipped in iron armor and were carrying swords. Not sparing any more words thieves of Basra started their attack.

"Power of Darkness!" - yelled Van Hawk and rushed into the fight.

Death Knights were quite adept with dark magic. The spell he just used significantly increased weapon damage and defense of armor.

"Deadly Blade!"

Van Hawk accumulated dark energy in his blade and directed it towards the oncoming thieves. His weapon greatly darkened and a few moments later it let out thousands of finest threads, which struck attacking enemies in the chest.

Thieves collapsed to the floor.

Zephyr and Hwaryeong were astounded.

'Whoa...'

'That's what level 290 monsters look like? How does Weed even control such a beast?'

At that moment they realized that Weed wasn't just another ordinary player, and that it is really possible to hunt in dungeon of Basra with just 4 people. Weed's words weren't just feeling bragging any more.

Meanwhile Weed himself was surprised not less than his friends.

'Wow, when did he become so powerful?'

Weed could only remember him beating the knight and improving his own skills. And he was extremely surprised to see his minion in a different light. Death knight managed to beat four enemies with a single strike. Even though it was partially due to his dark nature, which increased damage to non-undead enemies.

'Crimson amulet of life... the item in which the death knight Van Hawk was eternally trapped. Furthermore, he had another black amulet with Lord Tori in it inside his backpack... Was that really a reward? Or just some cunning way for NPC to increase its level before breaking out of...'

Suddenly Weed forgot about everything, jumped forward and dropped the hilt of his sword on the head of Van Hawk, who lifted his sword to finish defeated enemies.

"I command! Do not to kill them. Just disable, we'll finish them ourselves."

"Understood Master. - Abruptly roared Van Hawk in Weed's face."

Because of significant increase in level death knight could feel his growing power and wasn't so content with receiving orders from 'lowbie' Weed.

'That jerk is talking back to me. I haven't taught him enough...'

Weed noted to self to teach a lesson to Van Hawk later, but for now he headed into battle:

"Sculpting blade!"

He couldn't imagine himself without that technique! With his blade shining blue Weed was rushing among enemies dealing multiple blows.

"Die!"

"Money! Give me your money!"

His opponents' swords were passing dangerously close to Weed. Because of dodging and parrying he managed not to get any wounds. Though from aside, he looked like he has given up on his

life.

'Here... this is more fun...'

The thrill of being completely surrounded by enemies. Your heartbeat quickens, you start to perceive your opponents' breath and movements. Intoxicating sensation of your own might fills you with overflowing happiness and you feel like you can conquer the world. A game like this will never become boring!

Weed thought about Swords.

In the school, Hyun only was taught basic skills, so he had to learn the art of the sword by himself in the game. However lately he's been coming to the dojo to learn from the master of the sword himself. An Hyun-Do wasn't an ordinary man, so his lessons weren't ordinary as well.

"This is a Sword."

In the hands of his teacher the sword was drawing graceful and smooth curves. It was hard to believe that someone could handle a sword like that. This was an art of a real master, who was creating another masterpiece.

'This really is a Sword.' - thought Hyun, watching in fascination.

However, as if reacting to his thoughts, the pattern started to change. Now it was a prowling predator, or an eagle, falling from

the sky, or... Then, in front of the predator the Fort Odein appeared.

'No, not Odein, but something solid, significant...'

Something thicker and taller than Fort's walls blocked predator's path. The obstacle was in his way, and without a second thought the beast lunged forward and tore it apart and rushed ahead.

"Sword... It is harder to master than a gun, but by doing it you become stronger. Death, decease and other hardships no longer bother you. I became free after I mastered the sword."

Lee Hyun learned a lot from An Hyon-Do. He entirely changed his attitude towards sword, learned to properly breath, move and take care of his weapon. He became stronger.

Even though, his life wasn't easy before he started going to the dojo. Absence of parents, debts and constant fights with bullies. Hyun could violently assault anyone in attempts to defend every precious memory of his parents. And that strengthened his spirit; he would never back out of a fight. However watching the skill of his teacher, Hyun started to realize that only god knew if there's a limit to mastery of a sword.

Every thief-monster was a lot stronger than death knights of Lavias. In the fight with the knights he only had to watch the front, but now he didn't have the right to miss anything happening at his sides or his back.

'Woah, fights grow more and more entertaining...'

Weed avoided a long stab from the side and lunged forward.

"AAAAA!"

His hands were flying around him, parrying and striking at the same time.

You have dealt a critical strike.

You deal consecutive critical strikes.

Your continuous attack succeeded.

Do you want to save the series of strikes?

Skillfully moving from enemy to enemy, Weed was dealing series of critical strikes. If you were to deal an exceptionally successful series of strikes in the game, you would be able to save it, to later use it at will as an individual technique. However Weed just dismissed the message and rushed back into battle.

For Weed fight was something living, unpredictable and extraordinary. Sometimes you have to act as your instinct tells you, and by using fixed techniques you just restrain yourself.

"Sculpting blade!"

After killing three monsters he dove right in the middle of enemy group. With a trust in his skill and polished armor he was eagerly spilling enemies' blood.

Though a bit later, but Hwaryeong and Zephyr also joined the battle.

"Charming dance!"

Enemies who watched erotic and tempting moves of the girl, froze in confusion and embarrassment. Their cheeks reddened and eyes filled with desire.

"Such a beautiful girl."

"Oooo! Why did I go from knight to thief, if only I still were..."

"She melted my heart of stone!"

Having captured the enemies' attention she exclaimed:

"No introductions! I have no interest in you!"

"Eeeeh?!"

Her words left enemies stunned, and she proceeded to dance with another group. Not forgetting to cooperate with partners of course.

"These ones won't be attacking us."

"For how long?" - Immediately asked Zephyr. Their lives depended on that information.

"About two minutes. Their level is too high; you must deal with the rest by that time."

"Swing!"

Zephyr swung his fishing rod and joined the fight. Every time he extended his rod a few enemies were knocked down.

Weed and Van were holding back main forces of enemy. Hwaryeong tamed enemies to the right and Zephyr was fighting the ones on the left! Compared to previous fights, their situation was complicated, so they had to give their all to stay alive.

Hwaryeong incapacitated 12 more opponents and fell on the floor exhausted.

"I'm done... can't continue..."

She spent all of her mana, and was sitting on the floor completely drained. Up to this time Hwaryeong always tried to pick the weaker monsters while not exerting too much in a fight. But this time she had to give it her all and she realized, that her dance techniques and attributes weren't developed enough. She wasn't strong enough.

'That's hard... I probably should have fought stronger opponents before?' - Slowly thought Hwaryng, expecting some monster to end her life at any moment.

But then there appeared Zephyr, who came to cover her from advancing enemies. Thanks to fishing, his attributes, especially fortitude and stamina, were highly developed, so he handled this fight better.

Zephyr was fighting the surrounding monsters at his limit. He wasn't hitting opponents one by one, but all of them at the same time! Fisherman's skills allowed him to damage whole bunch of enemies at the same time.

When their health was dropping to about a third they were dying, as they were immediately finished by a series of critical strikes from suddenly appearing Weed. It seemed like the situation was straightening out, when enemies, incapacitated earlier by Hwaryeong started to come to their senses.

The intense battle continued without a single moment of rest.

"Sculpting blade!"

Weed was trying to move as fast as possible, but still the moment he was finishing one opponent another was already attacking him. He had to hurry: if he were to stop even for a moment monsters would come closer and completely surround him, which would be a sure death.

Hwaryeong regained some strength and hurried to back up Zephyr. She was dancing like a butterfly, stabbing exposed sides of enemies with her daggers. It seemed that the battle will never end. However a few moments later deeply surprised Hwaryeong realized that there was no one else to fight.

She didn't remember how she was fighting and who dealt the last blow. In her chaotic memories fight looked like a fragment of hell. It was hard, long and extremely dangerous... She couldn't believe they won!

'Phew... That was hard, but... fun...' - she wiped sweat off her forehead and smiled.

That was the only fight on her memory where she had to exert herself by 110%. Her mood was great.

Well, if not for death knight's help, they'd all be finished by now. But that didn't upset her at all, their victory was well-deserved.

"Weed, do you always fight like this?" - asked Hwaryeong the question that had been growing inside her since the beginning of the fight.

"Yes," - calmly answered Weed. He already started to repair damaged armor.

If armor or weapons were losing even a bit of durability, first thing after a fight Weed was repairing them.

"But that is so dangerous! And hard! Are you not afraid at all to fight monsters, whose level is a lot higher than yours?"

Hwaryeong got a little frightened. She couldn't imagine how one could be able to fight alone with only enemies all around. Even though they were playing a virtual reality game the fear was real.

In tight situations the stench of blood and the feeling of opponent's strength were often stunning players by fear. After that they were easily killed.

"You know Hwaryeong, in Lavias I had to climb very high, and from up there all the monsters looked so small. It seemed like I can squish them with a finger. That's when I realized that they're just food. Food that makes me stronger."

Hwaryeong let out another of her dazzling smiles.

"Seriously, with you Weed, there's no time to be bored."

However not everyone was celebrating the end of the fight. Zephyr was watching death knight with fear.

"Zephyr?!"

"Hwa... Hwa... Hwaryeong." - Worry made him stutter.

"What happened?"

"Look at the death knight..."

"Huh? Death Knight?"

She looked at Van and noticed that he's preparing another of his techniques. Hwaryeong was oblivious to what was going on so she became curious.

She was unaware of what Zephyr realized long ago. He got to fish

with Weed for quite a long time, so he had an idea on what was about to happen. Did you think after fishing Weed was sitting in a shade to relax? Not at all!

Having finished fixing armor, Weed applied a number of bandages and got up on his feet.

"Hmmm... - He said, - now it'll get a bit dangerous. Don't worry too much, but I think we might have a couple close calls this time."

"..."

"You know, I'm not in my best shape. I haven't been fighting for a long time. To be honest, I don't even remember the last time my health dropped below 15%. Even in Odein I was fighting mostly weak opponents."

"..."

"Let's see. After this battle only my Endurance slightly raised. That's because I made a miscalculation and the battle wasn't as hard as I expected. Next time I should aim to drop my health to 3%. I'll tell you a secret: when your health gets very low, your Endurance attribute increases greatly. So in following battles you should try to lose as much health as you can. Trust me, that'll pay off handsomely. For example, at the moment enemies' hits feel like tickling for me."

Zephyr and Hwaryeong were speechless from surprise.

'That's something! So the blows of thieves of Basra are 'ticklish' for him?'

'How? Even though he has an intermediate blacksmith skill, he can't be...'

'My armor isn't any worse, but every hit of a monster hurts like hell!'

'Damn masochist!'

But his next words shook them even more.

"Well, now that the scouting and warm-up is over, it is time we fight for real."

Scouting? For Zephyr and Hwaryeong previous fight was living hell!

Having seen their twisted in horror faces, he asked in doubt:

"So... Do you accept me as a party leader? If so, then the hunt goes on."

They hurriedly nodded. Having accepted Weed's invitation, they automatically assigned him as a party leader. And also he was the strongest of the three.

Even though Zephyr's fishing and Hwaryeong's dances allowed them to raise their attributes quite a lot, they still were as far from Weed as from the moon.

'He has 5 crafting skills at intermediate level...'

'He's a beast. A machine... To do all those things...'

He was odd, of that Hwaryeong and Zephyr could agree.

Let alone his crafting profession having battle techniques, his attributes were ridiculously high as well! Looking at Weed they could feel their inferiority, even though compared to other players they were pretty normal.

'So there exist people like Weed...'

'We aren't that useless!' - they thought.

Usually the party leader's position was taken by a warrior or a knight, due to them having high Charisma and Leadership attributes. Because if leader had high level of those two attributes, party members were less likely to be affected by panic and were getting increased experience. And monsters confronting such players were not able to use their skills to the fullest.

"Aaaaaaa!"

"Deadly dance! Charming dance!"

"Fishing rod feint!"

"Come on! Hit me! Raise my endurance!"

The hunt has started.

Endless fight to the death against thieves of Basra. As soon as one group of monsters got finished, they were switching to the next. They only had time for quick repairs and light healing.

"Waaaaaaa!"

In the past Zephyr wouldn't believe if someone was to tell him he won't be looting defeated enemies. But it was happening now, because of the constantly attacking waves of enemies they just didn't have time for that.

They were fighting in such manner for almost 16 hours, when finally Zephyr got wounded. A thief has stabbed him in the stomach with a sword. A deadly injury.

Hwaryeong threw a hateful glance at Weed.

"You overdid it! We are humans, and when we get tired we need rest!"

Then Hwaryeong looked at Zephyr with a bit of envy.

'He's dying... At least he'll get some rest... I wonder when I will get free from that devil?!'

That was the first time she was envious of a dying player.

With a relieved smile Zephyr said:

"I'm fine, Hwaryeong, Weed, don't worry about me. Hahahahaha!"

He laughed to tears from joy. However Weed's expression didn't falter one bit.

'What if?.. No, can't be. He's not a priest and won't be able to save me...' - Zephyr got frightened for a moment, happily watching blood pouring out of his stomach.

His health was quickly dropping and already reached 23%. Situation wasn't critical, but without immediate priest's help an injury like this would end killing him.

But then Weed rummaged through his bag and started taking out bandages one by one.

"I'll fix you right away."

"Ahahah! With bandages? Don't joke like that..."

"Apply bandage! - Was shouting Weed again and again, rapidly applying multiple bandages."

Bleeding has stopped

Wound has closed

Life increased to 26%

Life increased to 29%

"Wow! - Zephyr's eyes were round from astonishment."

He gave Weed a frightened look.

"Ermm... Weed, what's your level of First Aid?"

"Intermediate 9th level."

Just a little bit away from the high level!

During his long hunt in the province of Morata, Weed had to apply loads of bandages and so his skill level got surprisingly high. Usually parties had at least one priest, so players weren't using First Aid skill at all, so most of them had a skill level of beginner even on high levels.

"Intermediate 9th level of First Aid..."

Zephyr was hitting his fist on the ground in sorrow. Damn Weed, a real sadist and devil! Now he'll have to hunt monsters forever!

The battle continued...

Weed was slaying one monster after another and was thinking that it wasn't actually that hard. Compared to what he experienced in the province of Morata, dungeon of Basra looked like kindergarten. Even in Lavias death knights were a lot more dangerous for him!

At least they were using long swords and dark magic. Thieves of Basra on the contrary used short swords, and though they attacked in great numbers they were a lot less dangerous opponents.

This time he didn't have Alveron with his healing magic, but since then his health has raised a lot because of improved attributes and fishing. To almost twice the amount, 1400.

Also, thanks to his blacksmith skill, Weed was able to sharpen and polish equipment, increasing his survivability even further.

The profession of Legendary Moonlight Sculptor!

Only because of it Weed was forced to significantly improve his handicraft skill, which allowed him to raise many other skills to intermediate level during last few months. And those made him even stronger than if he was still hunting up to now and achieved a level of 280.

To become stronger and fight harder battles. Weed enjoyed fighting strong opponents; that's why he went to the 4th floor of dungeon of Basra. And even before, he was fighting death knights while only having level 110. That sure was hard, and he died a lot, but having gained some power and experience, he was winning battle after another and that was making him happy.

Having defeated another group of monsters, Weed suddenly realized that his bag was full.

"Crap..."

Hwaryeong and Zephyr weren't sad at all!

"Can't help it..." - dragged Weed.

Hwaryeong and Zephyr started to nod excitedly.

'Time to end it. It was a hard hunt.'

'Damn, that was terrifying.'

They were sure, that thieves of Basra will be coming to them in nightmares for the rest of their lives.

But then Weed's words shocked them yet again.

"Can't help it, we'll have to make a quick trip to the village to sell the stuff, and then we'll come back again. Thieves of Basra wait for us. Let's do it quickly."

'Daaaaaaaamn!!!'

Chapter 9: The Dark Gamer Union

Lee Hyun closed his math textbook.

A few years ago he had to drop out of middle school, and since then he never once thought he'd open a textbook again. However, to pass the exam in order to get high school diploma he just had to get back to studying.

"Hmmm..."

Ever since Hyun left school, he was spending all of his time on earning money by manual labor, so his brain got pretty rusty. He was meticulously reading the book, but its meaning was eluding him.

"Damn, why are they teaching so many different formulae!? If I would ever need them, they can be easily found on the internet; and for the complicated stuff I could use a calculator..."

Lee Hyun was muttering to himself nonstop. It was very hard to study math all by himself, but going to cram school would mean additional expenses.

I should probably just forget it and return to the game... But I already paid for exam...

After a long speculation Hyun and his sister decided that she'll

help him with studies for an hour every couple of days. But even with his sister's help, learning math was very hard. And when the student has no interest in the subject, teacher has to put dozen times more effort.

However Hayan had planned everything ahead. Knowing her brother well, she took an unusual approach to education.

"Look. This number is your savings. Think about them! You deposited \$300 for 12 month with 5.39% interest rate. How much will you get in the end?"

"316 dollars and 17 cents!"

When Hayan was asking questions like that, she was always getting a correct answer in a blink of an eye. But that answer didn't satisfy Hyun as he continued:

"The interest will amount to \$16.17. But they are subjected to taxes. It's either \$2.10 of simplified tax, or \$2.42 of standard tax."

Hayan smiled happily:

"See? It's simple. You have to learn everything in a similar manner. Now to the next problem. Count the money."

After a long break from studying, Hyun's head was barely working; but gradually he started to notice that solving problems became easier and easier.

Let's see!

Hyun have read all the textbooks and solved half the problems from them. He even borrowed all the textbooks his sister had.

All in 4 days before the exam!

That's because when you still have a lot of time you just can't make yourself study. But once exams are already at hand, you just have no choice but to get yourself together and learn all you can in the remaining time.

And so came the day of the exam.

Hyun left his home early, to be able to walk to the school in the centre of the town, where his exam was held.

I must... I have to do my best...

On the way there he visited his grandmother in the hospital. She was getting better, she wasn't as pale, and according to her doctor, she was able to go for walks all by herself.

"Don't worry if you fail, Hyun. You'll always be able to prepare better and pass all your exams." - said his grandmother with an encouraging smile.

"Sure, Grandma..."

Lee Hyun tightly gripped her hand.

His grandmother's hands were all wrinkled from the hard manual labor that she had to do in her late years to raise Hyun and Hayan after their parents died.

Hyun will be grateful to her for the rest of his life. If not for their grandmother, they'd be sent to orphanage and most likely get separated, as it is rare for two children to be adopted by the same family.

"Well, I should go now..." - Hyun said goodbye to his grandmother and went to the school.

Exam was held at a public high school 'Korea'. It was part of educational complex 'Korea' and was located near a college and a university.

Though the university didn't get into top ten most prestigious universities of the country, it had good teaching staff and well-designed infrastructure. A lot of talented young people, including students from abroad, were studying here in an independent and creative environment.

The main quality of a prestigious university isn't its rating inside the country, but its reputation abroad. 'Korea' university was well-known in other countries, so it had more students from abroad

than any other Korean university.

Lee Hyun appreciated the majesty of the main building of the university.

Even though I live a lousy life... but I swear, my sister will be able to study here...

Every group consisted of 30 people.

After receiving his question list, Lee Hyun noted with a surprise that he knew most of it. His intense and rushed studying method had a great result.

Though he shouldn't ignore the fact that this exam was meant for adult and elderly people, who for some reason, were not able to get a proper education. So it was a bit easier than the usual exam.

I know almost all of them. If only I had a chance to continue getting education, I'm sure I would have achieved a great result. - thought Hyun, slowly looking through the questions.

Hyun regretted a lot that he wasn't able to continue going to school. In his opinion, the faults in Korean educational system gave rise to another unfortunate genius!

But he didn't have time for idle thoughts, so he took his pen and started writing down answers to the questions, contemplating deep in thoughts over some problem from time to time.

One of the subjects Hyun was allowed to choose for his exam was ethics. Actually, he could pick a foreign language or some other subject, but he picked ethics as he decided that he doesn't need to study it, you just have to know basic principles.

1. You found a wallet on the ground. What will you do?

Take it.

Pick it up and check for any witnesses.

Pick it up and run away.

Pick it up, check for ID card, and try to find the owner.

Take money and leave the wallet.

Lee Hyun scratched his head. Even his decision to leave school wasn't as hard to make.

So which answer is the right one?

He thought ethics was an easy subject, but it proved to have such complicated questions.

Well, 3 of the answers are correct...

After pondering for a while he opted to the 2nd answer. 5th looked correct as well, but 'leaving the wallet' wasn't the best choice.

Other ethics questions weren't as hard, and Hyun answered them with ease.

I'm totally getting a full mark for ethics.

Ethics was last subject, so with it he finished his exam.

"In my last trip to Ross Gleasis I got a new weapon. Shining Golden Axe! With 60+ damage!"

"What about bonus stats?"

"Strength +45, Agility -10, increased chance to not to encounter bandits while travelling; if it falls in water it will be lost."

"Whoa! Cool!"

In the hallways, people who just finished their exam, were

standing in small groups. And almost all of them were talking about Royal Road.

"Golden axe..."

Axes in the game had the highest damage attribute, but their attack range and speed were considered to be the lowest. Even though every hit from an axe would deal tremendous damage, it didn't matter much if you couldn't land even one of them. So, if you knew how to wield an axe, you were a really dangerous fighter.

Lee Hyun picked up his bag and started walking towards the exit. He wasn't in a hurry so he decided to walk behind that gossiping group of guys. He wanted to hear the rest of their conversation.

One of the guys looked to be around 30 years old; the other two were a bit younger.

"Joong Hoon, I'm jealous. When we left school all we did was drinking..."

"Yeah, we were just fooling around, while you're a Dark Gamers Union member..."

Dark Gamer?

Dark Gamer was a name for players who were making money through games.

But Hyun was most surprised by the reaction of two other guys: they knew who that man was and they were jealous.

Isn't he ashamed?

Lee Hyun thought that there's nothing to be proud about if you earn money by playing games. Because you're not making anything useful, not bringing anything new into the world, you just make money out of thin air. And were games to disappear, you'd be one of the most useless people in the world.

"Joong Hoon, what's your level?"

"My level? Let's see... what was it... 355."

"That's huge! I have a lot of friends in game, but none of them are of such a high level. And what's your rating?"

"I'm in the top 10000."

The number of players in the game went over 100 millions, so being in top 10000 meant a lot.

Already at 355th level. Lucky one.

Lee Hyun couldn't hide his envy and slowed down his pace. To get home he had to take a bus.

However Joong Hoon and two guys stopped on the parking lot near a foreign car.

"Get in, I'll show you what being a dark gamer is."

"Really? Thanks!"

They got in a car and Hyun didn't have a choice but to be on his way to bus stop, when Joong Hoon called out to Hyun:

"Hey! We have a spare seat, wanna join? If you live nearby I'll give you a lift."

Hyun started to consider if he should accept the invitation, but the man continued:

"It's fine. I see you play Royal Road as well. I noticed that you were listening to our conversation. We're headed to the regular meeting of dark gamers at the moment. If you want, you can join us."

Dark gamers were gathering at an abandoned warehouse.

Inside a huge building there were a couple of capsules, a long table, and multiple chairs.

"Before we start our meeting, I'll tell you about our Union..."

He introduced himself as Choi Joong Hoon and continued with a smile:

"How many people in your opinion make money by selling items from Royal Road? Not just once or twice, but those who make a living that way?"

"A few tens of thousands?" - asked one of the guys after a bit of thought.

Choi Joong Hoon shook his head.

"Not less than a hundred thousand."

"So many?"

"And most of them are from India, China and some other countries of East Asia."

International borders meant nothing for Royal Road. Any person from any country was able to enjoy the game using capsule. Even the language barrier was removed, thanks to the automatic speech translation software, provided by Unicon Corporation.

"I heard there's a trading company in Korea that works only with Royal Road..."

"That's true. They sell items and in-game money obtained by their employees. I'm not going to criticize them, they made their own decision. But we made ours, and do not want publicity. A lot of our members are unsociable by nature and prefer to be alone... Players like that wouldn't be able to show their potential in a big company. That is why we created The Dark Gamers Union."

Choi Joong Hoon's words slightly confused recruits.

"Then what does being in the Union mean?"

"Good Question. The main reason for Union is information exchange. Our union accumulates information gathered by members. It allows you to learn about hunting grounds, good dungeons, profitable trading routes and rare monsters..."

"Wow, you share information? So it means that once I join the Union I get access to the information database?"

"Unfortunately, it's not so easy. You can't get all the information immediately. Member's access level is determined by his rank within the Union."

"Eh, why's that?"

"That's just security measure. It didn't happen before, but some member might leak our information outside, and Union is all about information."

"Guess that's true. Once there's enough people about anything can happen."

"Yeah. Also players of level 100 have no use for information about dungeons of level 200 and higher. Therefore we assign ranks to our members according to the value of information they provide. And that rank determines how much access they have to our data. That's how it all works. Of course every new member gets access to the basic information."

"So rank is directly dependent on the value of information you provide?"

"Not just that. If you actively participate in the Union's activities, your rank rises. Same thing if you sell items through our auction website often enough. But there's a certain limit to that kind of advance in rank."

"That looks good enough. So how do we sign up?"

Two guys, who came with Choi Joong Hoon, started to fill the papers. They stated their character names, levels and other related information.

Depending on this data the initial rank was assigned. As the guys had a level of 140, they got assigned the lowest rank 'D'.

"Aren't you going to sign up too?", asked Joong Hoon after approaching the calmly sitting Hyun.

Lee Hyun thought it over 2nd time and after counting all the pros and cons shook his head.

"I'm not going to join."

"So that's your answer?"

Joong Hoon didn't look disappointed in the least.

"Well, if you refuse to join, that means you do play Royal Road. And as you agreed to come here with us you must have a certain interest in our organization. But if that's your decision, there's not much I can do..."

Then Choi Joong Hoon leaned to Hyun's ear and whispered:

"Those two are just random people. They probably won't even use information available to them. But I can see that you are different. So if you would join our Union, you'll get access to some special information..."

"..."

"I suppose you just don't want to bother with sharing valuable information, if you don't need access to information for newbies. Isn't that so?"

Lee Hyun was quite surprised. It looked like Choi Joong Hoon saw a lot of players like Hyun and so was pretty accurate with his assumptions.

"Anyway, that's fine. Everyone has their own principles. And our Union respects that. However I'll give you an advice: If you're a serious Royal Road player you'd better off joining our Union."

Lee Hyun, who was silent up till this moment, quietly replied:

"I don't have time to raise my rank and I don't want to give away any information."

If Lee Hyun was to reveal his name - Weed - he'd most likely have some problems. He recalled how On Joo-wan threatened to interview him.

But even the 2nd rejection didn't upset Joong Hoon. On the contrary, it seemed he liked Hyun's response.

"Okay. At least people like you won't stab in the back. Do you know our website? Then listen here. Login kj9008, password 165008. That's a special account for people who join our website for the first time. Once you login using it, you'll get a rank 'C', and it gives you access to a decent amount of valuable data, trust me. Also, you can change the password once you login if you're worried someone else might get access to your information."

"Why do I get such a special treatment?" - asked Hyun

indifferently, and added - "Colleague?"

"That's simple. Dark gamers have three rules. First rule of dark gamers is 'Don't trust anyone'. That exactly describes our current relationships."

"..."

"There's also the 2nd rule: 'Give as much as you take'. You seem to be the kind of person to follow those two rules, and would you use some of our information, you'd provide something valuable in return. I see a real dark gamer in you."

"What about 3rd rule?"

"And here's the 3rd rule: 'Only trust in money'."

"..."

And so Lee Hyun decided to join the Dark Gamers Union.

*

On the 4th level of dungeon of Basra Weed, Hwaryeong and Zephyr were concentrating on hunting.

They risked their lives in every fight, and with every fight their

skill and experience points were rising.

"Ok, health back to full... Weed, let's go look for the next fight."

"Yeah, that'd be nice."

Zephyr and Hwaryeong got on their feet.

Whatever the methods they tried to persuade Weed to slow down the pace of the hunt, it was all in vain. So they finally resigned themselves to his will.

Meanwhile, Weed was thinking that dungeon of Basra almost expended its value as a hunting ground.

We'll stay here for another day or two at most. I'm sorry for the time I had to spend on exam.

Quite a lot of time passed since the siege of Odein.

Balkan Guild was greatly weakened and won't be able to launch another assault on the stronghold for time being. So the winners will have enough time to secure their position. Most probably all the hunting grounds around Odein will become private, so only players from Prosperity Guild or their allies will be allowed to hunt there.

It's a pity.

Dungeon of Basra - one of the most famous dungeons, renowned for plentiful experience and valuable loot.

In the past two days Weed gained 17 levels, reaching level 247. But he doubted they will be able to hunt here for much longer.

I've got to get at least 5 more levels in the remaining time. And it's best to begin from some strong monster; I won't be able to get experience fast enough from small ones...

Weed called his friends and headed to the place they hadn't yet visited once - to the den of the dungeon's boss, a place called 'Main Revolt Headquarters'.

When Weed first mentioned his idea, Hwaryeong and Zephyr answered with a strong resent:

"I can't believe it!"

"Weed, have you finally gone nuts?!"

Dungeon of Basra's boss had a level of 290, and he was accompanied by subordinate knights of level 275. No wonder Weed's partners had such a reaction.

"Weed, we used to think that you had better judgment. But this time there's absolutely no way we can beat the boss and his

knights."

"Exactly!" - Zephyr backed Hwaryeong up -

"Basra's boss is a dark mage, and even said to be a necromancer. Necromancer's magic is very different from that of normal mages. And you also have to take into account his 290th level and an increase in health due to his 'boss' status."

"They say his attack power is enormous!"

"Yeah, you take a couple hits and you're dead."

Weed waved his hand to interrupt them:

"His attacks are really that strong?"

"Of course! And no kind of bandages will help that." - exclaimed Zephyr.

"And bandages can only be applied after the battle!" - added Hwaryeong.

Suddenly Zephyr and Hwaryeong exchanged glances and a complete unanimity could be read on their faces. They brightened up and smiled.

"Weed! We're coming!"

Once I die, I'll get to rest. - At that moment that was their only wish.

Those are some funny friends I've got myself here.

Weed wasn't getting bored with them around. He couldn't stop being surprised how simple they were. However Weed didn't realize that he was not much different; one just has to remember how agitated he becomes if even one coin is at stake.

"Hahaha! We haven't had any visitors for quite a while. What business do you have here?"

In the deepest part of the dungeon, sitting on a magnificent throne and dressed in gorgeous clothes, there was the dungeon's boss, accompanied by 2 knights and 12 thieves.

That's our end...

Thank god, it's going to end here.

Upon hearing the boss Hvaryung and Zephyr bid farewell to their lives. They weren't too nervous, at least their smiles indicated otherwise. But they did feel a little thrilled; after all they weren't encountering bosses all too often.

The main NPC of the dungeon was gathering forces to revenge British Confederacy, so it was possible to prevent the fight. Because if you are friendly enough, you would be able to get a quest from him, like to stop assassins sent for his head, or to provide thieves with the items they require.

Naturally, would you take one of those quests you'd become the enemy of British Confederacy. However not just anyone was able to take those quests but only players with high enough fame attribute.

So when Basra's boss started talking to Weed, Hwaryeong and Zephyr started to get nervous. Because if the fight won't start they won't get a chance to die.

But much to their relief Weed tightened his grip on the sword and answered:

"We came to kill you."

"Hohoho! So you're just another pack of British dogs! Well, if you came here to die I won't disappoint you. I'll hang your heads at the entrance as a warning for other puppets of Confederacy. Knights! Kill them!"

"Yes, your Royal Highness Archduke."

While the boss was babbling, Weed waved his sword and yelled:

"Holy blessing!"

The effect of Agatha's holy sword triggered and holy spirit infused Weed.

" High Priest's Blessing!"

The ring on Weed's hand faintly flared and covered Weed's body with soft glow.

Even though these items' effects had duration of only 20 minutes, they were blessed by the High Priest of church of Freya himself! In a single moment Weed became stronger by half.

"Van, hold off the thieves!"

"Understood, master."

Even death knight forgot his defiance in presence of such blessings. It wasn't wise to meddle with Weed when he was so strong.

"Zephyr, help Van to deal with thieves."

"But..."

If he was to fight, he'd prefer fighting knights, that'd be a faster

way to die.

"Hwaryeong will stall the knights. I'll take on the Archduke."

"What if they come to their senses?" - exclaimed Hwaryeong in a worried voice.

"Then deal with it. If Van and Zephyr finish the knights by then, they'll help you. I'll be busy with the boss."

Zephyr and Hwaryeong didn't have any choice but to follow Weed's orders.

Two knights were slowly approaching Weed, skilfully swinging their swords.

"Don't sleep Hwaryeong, begin!"

Zephyr immediately headed towards the group of thieves, and Weed easily slipped past two knights and rushed ahead. Hwaryeong was left alone, facing two knights.

"Charming dance!"

To charm enemies, stronger than her, she'll have to spend a lot of mana and dance much longer than usually. And knights were quickly approaching!

"For the glory of Basra!" shouted NPCs and jumped towards Hwaryeong.

Dancing girl closed her eyes in despair.

That'll probably hurt a little...

The pain would bring death! It was a lot more welcome than all those strenuous everyday fights that were leaving her completely exhausted.

However a second passed, than another, but nothing was happening to her! Moreover, she heard that knights had stopped and started to argue.

"Kill her, Jason."

"I don't want. You go, Tobon."

"I can't! As knights we gave an oath to always protect the ladies. It is our duty! If I kill her, I'll no longer be a knight."

"Well, I think the same way! But the boss ordered..."

The last words dismissed their doubts. Hwaryeong heard one of the knights approach her and say apologetically:

"Forgive us, lady!"

Even while expecting to die any moment, Hwaryeong never stopped her dance, she was still elegantly moving her hands and bending her body.

It wasn't difficult at all for her to dance with eyes closed. Over the last few days she had to dance in front of thieves of Basra many times, sometimes while fighting with extreme sleepiness. So she eventually learned to dance with closed eyes.

Ding!

You successfully executed Charming Dance.

Knights of Basra are ensnared.

"Ah! After all she's too beautiful, I can't kill her. Sorry boss, we aren't..."

Hwaryeong managed to disable the knights.

"Aww! I can't believe I did that!"

She collapsed on the ground in frustration, when Zephyr and Van, who just finished off the thieves, approached her.

"Awesome!"

Zephyr was admiring Weed's fight against the boss of Basra, who was throwing multiple dark spells at him.

"Pierce my enemy, Dark Arrows!"

Numerous arrows made of pure darkness shot from behind Archduke aiming at Weed. The spell was cast almost instantly, but Weed still managed to dodge all the arrows.

He was able to do that because he had already accounted for a possibility that something like this would happen. So the moment boss began to cast his spell Weed had determined its type and area of effect and started to evade it. Zephyr was completely astonished by that feat.

"Sculpting Blade!"

Weed swung his sword to deflect a few arrows he couldn't dodge and dashed towards Basra's boss.

"Blink!"

Basra's Archduke instantly teleported a few steps back, however on his chest a bleeding long cut was clearly visible.

Weed's Sculpting Blade technique was completely ignoring any armor!

For necromancers, who didn't have any armor and had low health, strikes like that were especially dangerous! If only the boss was a leech, he'd have almost infinite vitality like Lord Tori. But there were few monsters like that in the game, and usually players were trying to avoid them.

"Fools!"

After gaining some distance from Weed, the boss got a few moments to observe the situation and came to a conclusion that it wasn't favorable for him.

"It's useless to fight me!" – he shouted in rage - "I made a contract with the god of death! Do you want to know why those British bastards weren't able to defeat me? I'll show you! The Immortal Power! Arise my soldiers!"

The ground under their feet started to tremble and skeletons started to appear from it! Multiple black, red and white skeletons!

Archduke of Basra, as a true necromancer, used his main trump card, and summoned mage, warrior and archer skeletons to his aid. His voice got filled with triumph:

"Most of the Basra's warriors were buried here! This place was a burial ground for many generations, and since I was a child I used to come here to practice necromancy. Now this will become your burial ground as well! Ahahahaha!"

"Sculpting Blade!"

Weed's movements were significantly slowed now that he had to fight through hordes of summoned skeletons. Those monsters weren't that dangerous by themselves, but they'll make avoiding boss's attacks much harder, and that was what worried Weed the most. Every magic attack of the Archduke could lower Weed's health by third, if not by half.

"Die, human!"

One of the skeletons hit Weed from behind with his rusty sword. The hit was accurate, but there was almost no damage because Weed had carefully polished his armor before the fight started.

But attacks continued.

About level 220...

Weed started to think.

Thanks to his vast experience of fighting monsters he was able to

precisely determine the level of the enemy by one received hit.

Level 220 monsters won't be that dangerous...

But the problem was that the boss was able to summon skeletons indefinitely, and they were greatly hindering Weed's movements, while blessings would hold for just 20 minutes.

And once their duration is over, the fight will become a whole lot harder. In other words, he didn't have any time to spare.

"I've got to get rid of the undead... Yeah, I know the way! Fight fire with fire!"

All this time Weed was wearing the helmet of the Death knight that he got in Lavias.

"Summon skeletons!"

The helmet allowed Weed to summon undead of level 50. The exact amount and degree of obedience depended on the Leadership attribute of the summoner.

Even more skeletons rose from the ground. More than 200 of them, and all of them kneeled, expecting their master's order.

"Fight! Against those who threaten me!"

Two skeleton crowds started to fight each other. In this fight it was hardly possible to distinguish friend from foe.

"Servants of the god of death, I order you with power, given to me: submit to my will!" - shouted the Archduke.

"You're not the one who summoned us." - came the answer from the direction of the battle.

"You, idiots..."

Skeletons, summoned by Weed were a lot weaker than those of the necromancer. They were dying quickly and did no damage to the enemy, but they still managed to divert enemies' attention to let Weed escape the skeletons' ranks.

"Triple strike! Backstab!"

Weed started to assault the boss sparing no mana. Archduke was able to use blinks to evade Weed's attacks, but his advantage was already lost. Hwaryeong, Zephyr and Van finished the knights who had finally woken up and hurried to help Weed.

Now the entire party was chasing the fleeing boss, and a couple minutes later he succumbed to the furious onslaught of his opponents and died.

Ding!

- Endurance +1

- Fighting Spirit +1

- Level has risen.

Weed had already fought monsters of level over 290, so he only got one level for this victory. Of course this boss was stronger than the vampire lords, but he was still far weaker than Lord Tori...

"Wow! Great! We won!"

Zephyr and Hwaryeong celebrated their victory and walked towards Weed. But the focused expression on his face made them stop.

"Hmm, I have 3.5% of life left. I watched it closely..."

"..."

"Well, then let's continue the hunt."

" "

...

Chapter 10: The Largest Tomb

Weed had almost reached level 259 when the decree of Mavaros Guild was announced. A day later than Weed anticipated.

The fee for hunting in the dungeon of Basra was raised 3 times. Third and fourth levels of the dungeon were reserved for members of Prosperity and Mavaros Guilds. All the rare and unique items acquired by players during the hunt were to be sold to Mavaros Guild at reasonable prices.

"What the heck?"

"Dirty bastards! Reasonable prices my ass! They're deciding what reasonable is by themselves."

Initially, the decree wasn't accepted very favorably; but as it always happens, in a couple days the unrest calmed down. On the continent of Versailles laws were set by whoever had the power.

There were no guilds around Fort Ohdein stronger than Prosperity Guild and their allies. And as the latter ones played a significant role in defense of Ohdein, Prosperity Guild was overlooking some of their whims. And if you didn't want to be pushed around, you had to join them.

Right after the announcement, Mavaros Guild started recruiting new members at the entrance to dungeon of Basra. They were able to drag a lot of players to their ranks.

"We should raise our levels more sometime later."

"See you around, Weed!"

After he parted with Hwaryeong and Zephyr, Weed left Basra and made his way to the mission of Order of Freya, located inside the fort.

"What brings you here?"

In response to Priest's question Weed showed his hand wearing the High Priest's ring.

"I have come to use the portal."

"Oh! The savior of our order! We hoped you would visit us one day."

Priest grabbed Weed's palm with both hands and started shaking it in a fit of joy. Paladins of the Order came out to see the hero as well. One priestess exclaimed:

"Savior Weed! Our resident priestesses wanted to see you too. Would that be ok with you?"

Weed nodded and was instantly surrounded by lovely priestesses. Freya valued beauty, thus all the priestesses of her church were

beauties with slim bodies, big bright eyes and white skin.

The lovely priestesses, humbled by the opportunity to meet and talk to Weed, sprinkled him with holy water and scattered with cheers.

You got Freya's Blessing

Defence +26%

Health regeneration speed increased by 26%

You are protected from dark magic, until holy water on your clothes dries.

Your stamina has increased. Increase in stamina may be utilised in various activities. For example, if you're an adult, you and your loved one can spend a wonderful time having... (TN: an afternoon cup of tea obviously)

Weed closed the message window.

The goddess' blessing was a step ahead from an ordinary blessing

for donation. But it didn't please Weed too much as it would expire before he might need it.

"Show me the road to the portal."

"Fine. This way..."

The Priest slowly headed deep into the temple. There were few players permitted to use Freya's portals, so Weed didn't have to wait for his turn.

The portal's attendant asked:

"What's your destination?"

"Rosenheim Kingdom. Citadel of Serabourg."

"I'm opening the portal now."

Weed got bathed by the light from the portal.

"Buying items!"

"Who wants to go for a hunt? Looking for mages!"

"Master tracker here! Will find you any monster you want with my sense of smell. Choose whom you fight with yourself!"

Weed was yet again standing by the fountain at the Central Square of the Citadel. It took him almost a month to travel across Barkan Mountains to the British Confederacy, but he returned in a matter of seconds.

Rosenheim Kingdom!

"It's been a long time since the last time I was here." - muttered Weed after taking a look around the square.

People's clothing became more diverse and colourful; their weapons were all new and shiny. A lot of things had changed and Weed didn't feel like he returned home at all.

"Weed!"

Pale, Surka, Romune and Iren were running towards him with happy faces.

"It's been ages!" - exclaimed Surka and tightly embraced Weed.

Romune and Irene soon followed their friend and clung to Weed's sides.

Weed got deeply moved, though only until he heard the girl's next words:

"Irene and Romune are terrible cooks. Weed, I wanted to see you again so much!"

"Surka!"

"Your Cooking skill! Did you raise it? Quick, make us something tasty... pretty please!"

"..."

It turned out that girls were stuck to him only because of his great cooking. Surka couldn't forget the taste of his dishes and was impatiently counting days awaiting their next meeting.

Having grasped the situation, Weed wasn't disappointed much. It was his first time seeing Pale and girls since they parted in Lavias.

'They're so pure... It's worth living in a world where people like them, who don't chase money and accept me as I am, still exist...'

Weed gave his friends a heart-warming smile and pulled out cooking utensils.

"So, today I'll make you pork fried in batter."

"Yay!"

Weed did his best to cook a serving for each of the four hungry friends. In just a minute their plates were empty again. Once satisfied, they switched their attention to Weed himself. Even though they've been exchanging 'whispers', it was their first time meeting in person after a long time, so they were dying to know all the details of Weed's adventures.

Weed made everyone some more food and started to leisurely retell the story of his travels.

"Eh! The most beautiful girl got turned into stone? I wish I could see all of that myself."

Irene was a priest, so she was very sorry she wasn't able to participate in the liberation of province of Morata.

"It's a shame my level was too low at that time, but now you can rely on me, Weed! With my level 220 I'll be handy for you Weed, as I'm sure you'll go hunting soon."

"Thanks, I'll keep that in mind." - said Weed.

"Oh!" - exclaimed Pale after remembering something. - "We often talk to Mapan. He's helping my parents a lot with advices and supplies for their shop. He told you were hunting in dungeon of Basra with Hwaryeong."

"Yeah. That's true."

"Then your current level..."

It was obvious that Pale's was worrying, he didn't even finish his sentence.

Weed looked straight at him and gave an honest answer:

"259."

"....."

"....."

"Che!" - furious Surka gave Weed a jealous glare and moved away from him.

At that moment royal guards appeared on the square and surrounded Weed, Pale and the two girls.

"What's going on?"

"Those people must be criminals." - started gossiping players around the square.

Things like that weren't common, so more and more players were becoming curious.

"What if..."

"Weed, did you kill someone?"

Confused, Pale, Romune and Irene were looking at not any less confused Weed.

"Hmm... I don't think I did something incriminating in Rosenheim..."

He racked his memory, but still couldn't remember anything that could have caused this. Surrounding soldiers stepped aside to let forward a man in knight's outfit, who asked in a loud voice:

"Which one of you is the sculptor Weed?"

"That would be me, but..."

Weed warily got up.

"King wishes to see you. Please come with me..."

Knight's words were a complete surprise for Weed. He didn't expect to meet the King Theodarren himself.

"He's lucky! Hurry, we should take some pictures."

Clicks started to sound from all directions, indicating that players started to take photos of the event.

"Look, the King himself wants to meet that guy! Hey, call everyone else here!"

In a matter of seconds the square became crowded, everyone tried to get as close to the centre as possible. Some people wanted to see Weed, some wanted to listen to what the knight was saying.

Sometimes aristocrats did invite adventurers. But usually it was a Baron or an Earl at most. But this time King Theodarren had himself invited some unknown player!

Looks like there's nothing to worry about, - thought Weed with a relieved sigh.

If it was some crime he committed, soldiers wouldn't be talking to him, but just capturing and delivering to jail or judge.

"May I inquire what the reason is?" - Weed asked cautiously.

Gears in his head were spinning a dozen times faster than usual. Weed was assessing the situation and calculating possible profit.

"I believe King has a request for you. I don't know details; everything will be explained at the palace." - the knight replied.

Weed remained calm, but the crowd gathered on the square was in uproar! Surrounding players were excitedly passing knight's words to those who were too far to hear them.

"They say the knight brought a request from the King of Rosenheim himself!"

"So it's a quest?"

"Looks like it."

Many jealous, envious and even some threatening stares were directed at Weed. There aren't many people in the world who aren't jealous of others' success.

Weed agreed to meet with the king and looked around. The square was overflowing with people, but he still managed to discern a mission of Order of Freya looming in the distance.

"Before I meet with the King, I would like to visit Order of Freya first, if it's possible."

"Fine. We'll escort you."

Religion and government tried not to interfere with each other in Royal Road. That's why Weed was allowed to visit the Order before going to the palace.

"We welcome the hero, heading to the far Lands of Despair."

Highest officials of the church came in person to greet Weed. When he returned the holy relics back to the Order of Freya, it greatly increased their influence points, and now wherever players would go, Order of Freya was well-known.

Knights and soldiers who were escorting Weed, stayed at the gates to wait for his return as he was now on the land of the Church and fell under protection of paladins and monks.

Weed went straight to the topic:

"First, I would like to know more about Lands of Despair."

"I am truly sorry, but our knowledge about them is limited. Lands of Despair are inhabited by giant monsters and savage Orc tribes, which are constantly in war with each other. Few humans live there, and those who do are mostly exiles, as it's extremely hard to survive there. Also, there used to live dark elves, but we are not aware of their fate, they might be all dead by now."

"..."

"We weren't able to find out where in Lands of Despair necromancers, worshipping Bareken are located. You will have to discover that yourself."

Just great! With a quest of 'B' difficulty I will also have to find out

details myself!

Weed gave priests a discontent look. In the province of Morata, while doing another 'B' quest, he was constantly on the verge of death! But he had 300 paladins and 100 priests at his command at the time!

"Then how many troops will I get for the job?"

Scared by angry face of Weed, the priest replied in confusion:

"We prepared 50 priests."

"50 priests?!"

"Yes, all the paladins and the rest of priests are busy spreading our faith in remote parts of the country. So once you're ready, we'll open a portal for you without delay."

Not paladins, not monks, but priests!

For a moment Weed felt like he's drowning. But it was too early to give up! Previous quest in the province of Morata seemed impossible as well, but he succeeded.

After receiving all the information he needed, disappointed Weed returned to the waiting soldiers at the entrance.

"He's really going to the palace!"

"He'll meet the King!"

Most of spectators followed the escort all the way. However once they approached the palace the crowd got stopped by the guards.

One of the knights led Weed into the main building of the palace. Of course he didn't forget to get a good look at the interior of the palace on his way.

You saw mural by Beodart

Art +1

You enjoyed the set of sculptures 'The King's Knights'

Art +2

You discovered 3 weapon sets of Balanch

Art +1

Looking at art was no different from creating it!

His art attribute was rising even if he was just enjoying creations of other masters. However it won't be possible to raise the art attribute this way indefinitely; as if you were looking at something of a lesser quality than what you have seen before, you wouldn't get any bonus.

In the palace Weed witnessed a lot of beautiful pieces of art, which boosted his art attribute by 30 points.

"Your Majesty, Righteous and Benevolent Ruler of Rosenheim, King Theodarren, we have brought adventurer Weed to you."

Their tour ended in a throne room.

The knight, who brought him there, kneeled before he spoke, and Weed tried to mirror him.

Nobles and other knights were standing in semi-circle beside the throne, occupied by King Theodarren. The King looked unwell; his face was covered by sickly blue and yellow spots.

"You are Weed?" - asked Theodarren in a loud and powerful voice.

"Yes, Your Highness."

"I summoned you to... Khhuwaaghh..."

The King vomited blood. Knights and servants rushed to help him, but were stopped by his hand gesture.

"I know my illness well enough, so you don't have to worry. Is your profession Moonlight Sculptor?"

"Yes, Your Highness."

"Moonlight sculptor, hmm, familiar profession. My mother had a close friend by name Zahab."

"Your Highness!"

Nobles were distressed by the king's words, but he continued.

"You all know that, don't you?"

"..."

"There's nothing to hide. Anyway, Weed, you must have an idea about sculpturing and I want to make you an offer. I don't have much time left to live. My entire life I was trying to make my country peaceful and orderly. To gather armies big enough so that British Confederacy would be trembling at the sight of them. So that, at my will, all the mountains, rivers and trees would be

shaking under their marching feet..."

King Theodarren loved to talk and to brag. He was talking about his affairs, deeds, even about things that had happened in his private quarters.

Weed was listening closely to him and tried not to miss anything important.

Where's the hint to fulfilling the quest?

However, no matter how hard he was focusing, all of the stories were useless. Be it how at an age of 5 King fell off the horse for the first time and broke his leg, or how beautiful were maids of the court - Theodarren was just spouting nonsense.

Having chattered in this manner for two hours, the King finally got to the point:

"...With every passing day I feel worse and worse. It is time I passed the burden of a king to a successor and retired. To a place my weak body would find peace. Time is running out, so I need a crypt. Make me a great and majestic crypt that would be astounding everyone with its splendour for many years to come. I'll provide you with as much manpower as you need..."

Ding!

New Quest! King Theodarren's Tomb.

Sometimes in anticipation of their death rulers of Rosenheim Kingdom order a crypt made for them. Theodarren can already feel death's breath, so he hired a famous sculptor to build a crypt for them.

However if the crypt doesn't match the greatness of the king the quest will be failed and you'll suffer a penalty.

You can request additional help for this quest. To finish this quest you'll be funded 100 000 gold.

Difficulty: 'B'.

Reward: In case of success, your reputation within Rosenheim Kingdom will increase by over 2000. The exact increase depends on the quality of the job.

Restrictions: In case of failure you'll experience the King's wrath. Your fame will lower.

Weed's reputation with Order of Freya was over 4600.

When you're on good terms with religious order you get multiple

advantages. You can get healed and use portals with no charge, hire a squad of paladins to help for cheap. On your journeys it'll be easier to pass customs and obtain quests of higher difficulty. Reputation worked similar to Fame.

However, good relationships with the royal court would bring even more advantages. You would be able to receive a title or spend your reputation points to get great items from the treasury.

Weed would definitely pick a weapon in one.

It was first time since Baran village when Weed got a quest directly related to his profession. At that time his mastery and fame were very low and he got a quest from common NPC, but this time he got a request from King himself!

Weed thought a little, but the decision had already formed inside his head.

He would never retreat from approaching monsters or refuse a quest! Though, the unknown consequences of refusing the quest played not the last part in his decision.

"I will do my best to provide Your Majesty with the most magnificent place for your final rest."

You have accepted the quest.

Weed came out of the palace deep in thoughts.

Great and majestic crypt... Very ambiguous requirements.

Should I build something like a dolmen?

That'll be fast and easy!

However, I might end up experiencing wrath of the king. Or even persecution from the Rosenheim army.

But as a reward I'll most probably receive some rare or unique item!

What if I view it from that side...

When Weed was expecting profit he was looking for opportunities to start acting!

Even if prices in Royal Road were to decrease, a rare or unique item would still sell for great money.

Weed couldn't afford to decline extra money, so he decided to complete the quest at any cost. However he had no idea how to

approach for building a crypt.

A huge or a normal one? Filled with stone soldiers? Statues? No, those are all pretty generic ideas...

He had to build a great, majestic, monumental crypt, which would fully meet the King's expectations.

Book 05: Village Of Exiles

Chapter 1: The Tomb Of The Great King

As Weed walked down the hall with the Knights, he thought deeply about the current problems at hand.

‘A legendary tomb that will leave a mark in history. One that is great and Majestic. A monument worthy of a King.’

It wasn’t going to be easy to build such a tomb while adhering to the King’s tastes. However Weed wasn’t known for giving up before even trying.

‘I have little talent in doing anything. But what if I combine what little talent I have with sheer effort and determination? Then, of course, I will succeed. Has that method ever failed me until now?’

No. Not even once was the answer.

In any business, hard work is the key to success. It’s a given that it is 99% hard work and 1% genius. No matter how talented you are, if you don’t put any effort in, you won’t reach your goal.

‘There’s nothing I can’t do!’

Weed was inspired.

The size of the tomb had to be overwhelming. Any flaws on its

sculptural design would be compensated by its size. Similar to his greatest creation, the Ice Dragon, the bigger, the better.

‘I’ll build the most majestic royal tomb! And of course, I will succeed!’

Upon completion of this quest, Weed would receive a large amount of experience as well as a rare weapon. However, he didn’t know the answer to the biggest question; how should he build the tomb?

- Weed, did you finish your audience with the King?

Pale suddenly whispered him. He became worried after Weed had been escorted away by the Royal Knights.

Weed whispered back:

- Yeah, I’m on my way out.

- We’re all worried about you. Is everything okay?

- Yes. I’ve received an important quest from the King.

- I see. So you’re leaving again...

Pale’s voice was filled with sorrow. Surka, Irene, and Romuna

felt the same. It had been awhile since their last meeting in the dungeons of Lavias, and now, just a few hours later, they would have to part again.

- Nope. This time, Pale-nim and the others can participate as well.

- Really? You should share even though the quest is from the King himself?

- Yes.

- By the way Weed, there's a huge crowd gathered at the entrance of the Palace. To be honest, I've never seen so many players in one place. If you get involved with the commotion, it might be a problem.

- There are a lot of people?

- More than words can describe. If you don't come out soon, they might start storming the palace.

Pale gave an accurate description of the situation. A massive amount of people were clamoring outside..

The King's Quest!

Hard work and artistic sense! The Majestic Tomb!

At that moment, Weed's thoughts gathered to construct a scheme, and his mouth stretched into an ominous smile.

‘Yes! I’ve decided. This is it!’

*

Pale, Irene, Romuna and Surka, quietly cheered for Weed.

“It’s hard to believe that the quest is from the King!”

“Tell me about it. It looks like the quest will be fun!”

Weed's quest from the King was a huge event. Because of that, they whispered carefully so that nobody else could overhear them.

“Are you sure we’ll be able to participate?”

“Yes, Weed said that he absolutely needed our help. There’s nothing to worry about.”

“Rather, I’m worried whether Weed can make it out safely,” Irene said anxiously.

Multitudes of players swarmed the Palace walls. The moment Weed appears, the players might start bombarding him with

questions, and wouldn't stop until their curiosity was satisfied.

For someone like Weed who only lived for money and preferred to be alone, he would not like being harassed by a huge wave of people.

“Please, let Weed come out of there unharmed” Irene prayed silently.

*

Weed came out of the Palace through the front gate where, by now, an immeasurable amount of players had gathered.

Players abandoned their activities after hearing rumors of the first player to have an audience with the King. People also surrounded the back, suspicious that Weed would try and sneak out the backdoor. However, Weed boldly came out the front gates, instantly becoming the center of attention.

“How were you able to meet the King?”

“Tell us how we can have an audience with the King!”

“We also want to meet the King, please tell us!”

A number of people started asking questions at the same time, which resulted in shouting people drowning each other out. As the

crowd shouted out, Weed examining the crowd's equipment.

‘You can buy those travel clothes for 3 gold’

Weed started appraising their equipment.

‘That shield costs 6 gold, but considering how worn out it looks, he probably bought it off someone. If he's good at bargaining, he might have been able to buy it for 2 gold’

Although there were some experienced players mixed in, the vast majority of the crowd was made up of newbies. Due to their low levels, they have yet to venture out of the city. The areas around Serabourg were perfect hunting grounds for beginners, so when the rumors began to circulate, they were among the first to arrive at the scene.

“Ahem” Weed cleared his throat

Just building a tomb was simple. But building a royal tomb the would satisfy the king and be able to strike awe into anyone who looked at it was an entirely different matter. If he were to try and construct it alone, it would take more than a year. Therefore, getting the job done quickly would require a huge amount of workers. Workers who would follow Weed's orders unquestionably.

‘These people will be my workers’

Weed used his Advanced Level 3 Lion's Roar to address the gathered crowd; otherwise, he would not have been heard by all.

“All of you, listen up! I will now inform you that I have just received a quest from His Majesty, King Theodarren, the ruler of Rosenheim Kingdom”

You have used Lion's Roar

His loud voice reverberated throughout the crowd. It sounded as if he were speaking from right next to them in a clearly audible and perfectly articulated voice. The majority of them had never heard such a powerful and clear voice before.

The interest of the crowd was once again ignited.

“What? A quest?”

Just meeting the King was incredible, but...”

“A quest from the King himself?”

“First time ever in the entire Versailles continent?”

“The first. It is the first time in the entire continent that a King has made a request”

The surrounding players became even more excited.

“Please tell us what the quest is!”

“Help us meet the King too!”

Their chatter overlapped and became incomprehensible, yet again. Weed stimulated their excitement even more when he said,

“I’ve been commissioned to build something very unique for the king. Fortunately, the quest can be shared!”

“Ooohhhh!”

“Let us be part of it!”

The crowd’s natural response regarding a quest directly from the King! They wanted to participate in such a quest even if they had to beg for it!

“Of course I will share it with everyone. Is it not our duty to help everyone else on the continent of Versailles who live and breathe the same air? However, getting to this stage was not easy, so I would like to receive an entry fee of 1 gold per person”

Everyone’s expectations became amplified. Blinded by Weed’s words, they thought his sharing of the quest was an act of virtue.

“That’s fair. I absolutely agree with you”

“Such a great man...”

“I’m willing to put my trust in such a guy!”

In the eyes of people right then and there, Weed was the most noble and righteous player in the continent of Versailles. It was a quest that had a difficulty rank of B. Even less difficult quests, like D or lower rank quests, were only shared for a huge amount of money if it was rare. However, Weed was willing to share his quest for just 1 gold.

As people looked at him, they only saw a kind face that led them to believe he was completely sincere, but in actuality Weed was busy calculating the potential profit to be made.

‘We’ll feel guilty if we obtained the quest for free...’

‘So that’s why he’s asking for a small amount of money!’

People misunderstood Weed’s intentions. After having heard his speech, their doubts were dispelled and they began to respect him more. A food with an appealing flavor is more likely to be bad for our body!

Everyone, at least once in their lifetime, will make this mistake; to get backstabbed by seemingly reliable and trustworthy people.

These words did not do Weed justice.

- What do you think Weed is trying to do?
- I suddenly feel extremely anxious.
- What is his purpose addressing all of these people...
- The King's quest can't be that bad..... can it?

Pale, Irene, and the others knew about Weed's personality, so they were whispering each other, discussing the situation at hand.

There was something strange was going on!

They walked closer to the crowd, just in time to see that the people gathered had already fallen for Weed's scam. Weed, with his dignified features and charismatic speech, made people believe in him, but those who were acquainted with Weed knew that he had a hidden agenda.

"Now then, I'll share the quest with you."

Weed raised his voice to be loud enough that veins began to pop out of his neck..

“First, I should warn you, that given the difficulty of the quest, you must promise me that you will follow all of my orders. I will only share the quest to those who make an oath”

The crowd was given a chance to reconsider their decisions, but in the end they all decided to follow Weed. They didn't question the reason why if someone would share a quest commissioned by the King.

There was no time to think!

Another uproar flared up and players made haste towards Weed to receive the quest.

“Move over, I'm first!”

“What are you talking about, I was here before you!”

In a moment, people formed a long queue to receive the quest. The line started from the Palace gates, spanned to the streets, and continued to grow even longer. Those who weren't able to see how the event started also lined up, with hopes of joining the expedition and receive something of value.

“Will you follow my commands until the quest is complete?”

“Of course. Thank you for letting me join.”

After receiving the quest, Weed received 1 gold.

Ding

Help Sculptor Weed build a prominent Tomb

King Theodarren of Rosenheim has little time left to live. In preparation for his death, he desires for an imperial tomb.

Difficulty: 'B'.

Reward: If successful, you will receive at least 50 points of reputation with the Royal Court.

Depending on the amount of work you do, additional Fame and rewards may be granted.

“Thank you.”

“Really, you have my gratitude.”

After receiving the quest, the players gratefully thanked him. Because the quest was originally given to Weed, he had the authority to select who he wanted to join him. Though the rewards for other people were different from the prizes for his initial quest,

people were still happy to be able to join a B rank quest given by the King.

Finally, it was Pale and his party's turn.

“Wow, a B rank quest...”

“You said you needed our help?”

Pale felt like his heart was about to burst out of his chest. Why did he ever believe Weed?! The moment he saw Weed with his innocent expression, he should have suspected something. And once he heard Weed announced that he would share the quest, he should have thought of an excuse and ran away. He should have felt that something was off. The B rank quest.

Pale and the girls knew exactly how Weed had completed a similar quest back in the province of Mora, so now they were in the state of panic and dreaded what was coming.

“I will follow your every command.”

“Assign any task to me, I won't fail you.”

Almost every player present wanted to participate in the construction of the tomb. Getting such a quest was the cause of excitement for everyone in the crowd. This was no surprise since the majority of the people were beginners and never before had someone commissioned a B rank quest, usually restricted to higher

level players, for just 1 gold.

While he was commissioning people, Weed started to prepare the necessary things for the plan in his head.

“First of all, I need to pick a good spot to build the tomb. An open area with a good view of mountains and rivers. Does anyone know of such a place?”

As soon as Weed asked, a couple of people raised their hands.

“I know a place like that!”

“Me too! It’s on the eastern plains close to the Serabourg castle . It has a river to the north, and mountains to the south.”

“What about the hill to the north of the castle? It’s a sunny area with a great view”

One of the most important elements of creating a successful sculpture is to take its surroundings into account and take advantage of where the sculpture will be built.

Feng-Shui!

For a greater chance of success, he needed to choose a perfect place. Weed decided to personally visit the suggested sites before settling for the best.

When Weed moved, thousands of players followed. Along the way, other players started join, similar to a snowball gaining mass as it rolled down a hill.

Finally, Weed stopped in an area East of the Serabourg Palace. There was more than enough space for the construction, and there were large boulders everywhere.

‘There are a lot of stones, and the ground is pretty solid... The scenery is fine. This is it.’

Usually, tombs were built in ravines or mountains. But to make a tomb that fit with Weed’s grand vision, he needed a broad and flat area.

“Now that that I’ve decided on this place, we’ll need a lot of building materials to construct the tomb. Does anyone know of any nearby quarries? We’ll need stones that can withstand a great deal of weight.”

“I know of one” an answer was immediately heard from the crowd.

People usually overlooked places such as quarries, however, the people in the crowd knew of many places like that.

Weed decided to visit the quarries. Incredibly large stones were piled up like a mountain With a little work, they should be able to

make the stones into the materials they needed to build the tomb.

Turning the face the crowd, Weed addressed them again.

“Now then, let’s get started on the B rank quest!”

“Whhooooaaa!”

“As you know, the rewards will be given according to your performance, so we’ll start working as soon as possible, and that means now. Those who cannot or are unwilling to participate today can begin tomorrow”

“Let’s get started!”

“We’ve got no time to lose!”

There was a large amount of rewards and fame riding on this quest. Naturally, people wanted to begin immediately.

*

There are many Kingdoms and adventurers scattered throughout the continent of Versailles! However, despite the great distances, rumors traveled at the speed of light.

On Royal Road’s website, someone wrote an article:

Topic: B rank difficulty quest.

Something incredible is happening in Rosenheim Kingdom.

For the first time ever, a player appeared and received an audience with the King. And what's even more surprising is that he announced that the King commissioned him to a B rank quest and shared it with the other players.

Sharing a high ranking quest made no sense.

Generally, higher level players had to form parties for a slim chance to complete such quests. And in Rosenheim Kingdom where majority of people are still low levels, sharing a significant quest is reckless.

I was there to witness the event, but was against the idea.

To my surprise, the player's profession was a sculptor. The B rank quest was to build a Royal tomb. Yet everyone joined the quest as it seemed to yield great rewards.

The somewhat exciting post of a B rank quest instantly caught the attention of a large amount of people. The article created a chain reaction. Coincidentally, most of the posted topics on Royal Road's website were written by players from the center of the continent.

Many players gathered their information from stories of veterans who were in the center of the continent. Therefore players who started on the edge of the continent were disregarded. The center of the continent was thought to be exemplary, as most of the good weapons, armors, and information came from there. However, this was the first time players from the central regions were envious of those who started in the Kingdom of Rosenheim, which was once considered an ‘undeveloped frontier’.

- Do you really think it's a B rank difficulty quest?
- If this is true, it'll be epic.
- And they said anyone can participate... Players from Rosenheim Kingdom sure are lucky.
- I'm from Dor Kingdom, but I'm going to Rosenheim as fast as possible.
- A sculptor... I didn't know such a profession even existed. I'm surprised that he met the King and received such a high ranking quest.

An illusion about the sculptor profession was ingrained into the minds of people. A high-level quest commissioned directly from the King was given to this class. Suddenly the number of novices holding sculpting knives increased, and sculpture shops were often filled with customers.

*

Players swarmed the mountains around the quarry like ants.

“O wind, condense into a blade and pursue my enemies! Wind Cutter!”

Mages gathered all their mana and fired spells. They targeted the rocks!

“My axe has no rival! It can shatter anything! Double Strike!”

Axe-wielding Barbarians used all their strength as they struck the rock.

Players used various skills, spells and techniques to divide the stones and shaped them into squares; then mages used spells to decrease the weight of the stones while the remaining players would carry them to the construction site.

“Everyone! When we count one, two, three, lift the rock! Heave-ho!”

Dozens of players hauled the stones to the foot of the mountain. Nobody tried to rush, as carrying a large boulder down the steep mountain slope was dangerous. Stones were then loaded into wagons and carts to be dragged the rest of the way.

“Move faster!”

“Let’s just carry these ourselves!”

With great effort, stones were beginning to pile up in the area East of Serabourg’s Palace. Players carried stones through sweat and tears!

‘I’m so tired I could drop dead.’

‘This weight will drive me crazy.’

‘I’m tired.’

Every player who carried a stone was tempted to quit a hundred times. But once they delivered the stone they are currently carrying, they always returned for the next one.

Damn addictive!

The prestigious B rank quest warped their ability to reason. To top it off, the wicked Weed devised a scheme to brainwash the workers. Whenever a player delivers a stone, Weed would tell them how much work they had done.

“That was your 12th stone. At the moment, the record is 14 stones.”

Subtle rivalry.

In addition, the majority of the players who were in front of Serabourg's Palace had joined the quest. They were blinded by the King's quest as differences in levels and professions became pointless. No matter how tired they were of the job, they did not give up. Even when they promised not to carry another stone, but when they reached the quarry, they ended up changing their minds.

‘I'll carry one more stone’

‘I'll definitely succeed!’

That was the temptation of the B rank quest.

*

Pale felt shivers run down his spine.

He looked down and saw a countless number of people carrying stones. People of all ages and gender were carrying stones. There was no end to the line.

‘People have to do hard labor even in a game...’

At the tremendous sight, Pale couldn't hold his admiration. Weed solved everything with hard work and his enthusiasm spread to

the people.

“Oooiii! Pale, move faster!”

Pale turned and glanced behind his back. Irene, Romuna, and Surka who were following him almost ran into him.

“Pale, you’re slowing everyone down!”

“ ... ”

Pale was speechless. What can else could he say? They were already in Weed’s clutches! Even Pale was carrying a stone. He could not resist the temptation of the fame and rewards promised for completing the B rank quest.

*

KMC Media would periodically browse blogs, forums, and websites dedicated to Royal Road. To create a good report, they had to cover large quantities of information and react quickly to situational changes. Most of the information in the internet was garbage. However, there’s still hope that even in a pile of rubbish something intriguing would appear.

First the experts separate interesting bits of information, and then a special team verifies its authenticity.

Information of the B rank quest in Rosenheim Kingdom got caught in their Information Network.

The Production Director, Experts, and Script Writers immediately gathered for a meeting.

“How reliable is that information?”

“Production Director, the source is still unknown, but the information seems to be true. All the players of Rosenheim Kingdom are familiar with the event. The spies we have planted among the players have sent confirmation of this.”

“Then shouldn’t we send a special correspondent immediately?”

“I think Shin Hye-Min is in Rosenheim Kingdom at the moment. A while ago, she said she was going there to do some quest”

Shin Hye-Min was considered one of the best hosts of KMC Media’s Royal Road division.

“Well, that’s a relief. Have Shin Hye-Min cover that story”

“Wait a minute. This morning she contacted us and said that something urgent came up and asked not to call her for a while...”

“Hye-Min did? That’s unusual” The Production Direction doubtfully said.

Shin Hye-Min was never late for a shooting, and thought to be a very responsible reporter.

“There’s such an important event going on the Rosenheim kingdom. What could possibly be important enough to disregard such a thing...”

“Well, maybe...”

*

“Ugh, this is heavy”

Maylon carried a stone with a groan. A large boulder rested on her shoulder supported only by her two arms.

‘I’m doing this for the fame’

She had experienced a lot of hardship because of her low fame stat. Early on when she was unfamiliar with the game, she would die often while hunting. Because hunting monsters in parties means sharing experience with the rest of the group, it was hard to gain a level. Even so, she worked furiously to get her level up.

She thought that she had talent for the game because she was leveling up more quickly than others. However, later on when she began her job as a host for the Royal Road program in the evening,

she had to give up more time to stay at her job. Meeting peers and making friends was necessary too.

‘I will have a wonderful adventure as well’

Maylon dreamed of a future filled with adventures. A righteous ranger helping others in times of crisis!

Until now, she was only able to talk about the adventures of others during her broadcasts. She was envious of them, and then decided that she wanted to have her own adventure to tell.

“But this stone is too heavy.” Maylon said in despair

Her eyes filled with large tears that were ready to fall at a moment’s notice.

Maylon didn’t have much strength. She invested almost all of her stat points in dexterity, as it was more useful for hunting in the mountainous areas where Rangers would usually be active. Thanks to her exceptionally low strength, the stone seemed heavier.

“Uuuwah!”

It was so heavy that she was about to collapse. Willpower was keeping her from falling, but her physical strength had reached its limit and she risked being squashed by the stone at any moment.

“Are you okay?”

A hand kept the stone Maylon held steady. She lifted her head and saw another archer that had reached out to help her. His expression was no different from hers.

Rangers and Archers use bows as their main weapon, so dexterity was their main attribute.

Small streams of sweat ran down his forehead from the effort. Nevertheless, he stopped to help Maylon.

“I’m fine... It must be hard on you.”

“It’s okay, the destination is close, so let me help you.”

“But you don’t look so good...”

“I’ll manage” The archer said as he sweat profusely.

Usually, a favor of this degree wouldn’t impress her. But in this situation, when the archer was struggling to be able to barely support himself, this simple act of kindness touched her heart.

“Ummm... What’s your name? My name’s Maylon. Don’t get me wrong, I was hoping we could be friends and exchange whispers from time to time...”

“Pale, my name is Pale.”

Maylon and Pale smiled at each other as sweat streamed down their faces.

Chapter 2: The Pyramid And The Dignity Of The King

At the construction site, Weed was cooking grass porridge and handing it out to workers for free.

"Good work, take your time and eat it slowly"

"Thank you."

Exhausted from carrying stones, players took the bowl of porridge with gratitude.

Stamina has increased by 35

Hunger has been relieved.

Thirst has been quenched.

Intermediate 4 Cooking Skill and Intermediate 9 Handicraft!

It was no wonder that porridge made by Weed was delicious. Although he has neglected his cooking skills lately, the enhancement of the food was still ample.

People liked and respected Weed.

They were thankful not only for sharing his quest, he had also

cooked free food for them.

Though the ingredients used, were literally grass, and was boiled to look like porridge, after receiving a bowl of boiling porridge, they gave their heartfelt thanks to Weed.

Among those who participated in the quest, some had really low levels and had little money. Weed had to cook grass porridge for these workers for free, and the players were thankful that they were able to work without dying from hunger.

Along with providing food, Weed also kept an eye on the atmosphere of the construction site. No matter how good-natured these people were, any complaints can grow into a strike, bringing an end to the construction. Such as being comfortable or lazy after being provided for, or from being full.

The main force behind the construction were the low-level players. They were more interested in the reward, and so worked harder. Watching them, other players unconsciously matched their speed.

"Thank you very much, Weed."

The girl, who just finished her serving, heartily thanked Weed. This cute little girl looked to be a 10th grade high school student.

"You're welcome, I'm happy you liked it." Weed responded with a smile.

Today, he had already given tens of thousands of such smiles. No matter how friendly you are, smiling so much wasn't easy. No wonder Weed's smile looked pretty strained! His eyes were smiling, but lips was slightly crooked, making his smile looked mocking. Nevertheless his voice was friendly.

"Lemon, you've moved 8 stones already!"

"Oh, you remember me?"

"Of course. You're one of those wonderful people, who praised my porridge with such pleasure... the sun isn't down yet, and if you manage to bring 1 or 2 more stones, you'll be one of those who worked the most today."

"Oh? I see. And I was just about to stop... I'll be right back!" The young girl Lemon, diligently ran towards the quarry.

After eating Weed's grass porridge, all the players felt energized, and became even more determined to carry stones to make the tomb. Though his porridge was called 'grass porridge', it wasn't made from grass alone!

Even if prepared by such a great cook like Weed, if you eat the same dish, you'll get fed up eventually. So, from time to time he was adding some meat and other ingredients, spending about 100 gold a day. Weed considered those expenses as investments to improve the level of his cooking skill!

Even though his dishes lacked refinement, since he cooked it in tremendous amounts, his cooking skill rose constantly.

Weed would have probably lost a lot of sleep if he had to lose 100 gold daily. Since the moment he started playing the game, he had been money grubbing over every single copper, trying to reach his goal as soon as possible.

But now the situation is a little different. Weed had hired workers to build the tomb, so he has to watch the process and bear the costs!

'No helping it. I won't be able to build it without their help, so I have to buy food and take care of them.' The thoughts of a dedicated, charitable businessman.

His facial expression, confident voice, and concern for the people—all of it created an image of an adult man.

However, Weed's true feelings were similar to a vicious python awaiting its prey.

'Eat fast so I can put you to work as fast as much as possible. Received 100,000 gold as operation costs for this quest, money spent so far is 700 gold so 99,300 gold still remains. In addition, earned more than 10,000 gold from the participation fees. Ultimately, it will be a surplus.'

Excessive labor! Exploitation! Eating grass porridge with a rotten smile while exhaustively putting them to work, vicious boss Weed!

*

On the Royal Road website, the construction of the tomb became prominent topic for discussion. And someone kindled the flames even more by posting another article.

Topic: People busy on the tomb construction.

Greetings.

Last time I posted a topic about a 'B' rank difficulty quest. Now I want to show you a short video from the construction site.

Please watch it.

He had recorded a video of what he had seen with his own eyes and posted it on the Internet.

Fresh news about the construction of the Royal Tomb!

Some people who had no interest in the event thus far were also intrigued. The moment they pressed the 'play' button, they saw what was an astonishing scene well beyond their imagination was.

Young boys and girls were grabbing heavy blocks of stones and carrying them on their shoulders.

"Unni, it's heavy."

"Hold on a little longer. In order to complete the quest, we must deliver it."

Emotional conversation between sisters!

Even the elderly carried stones. Thousands of people, regardless of age and gender were transporting stones. Sometimes players would get crushed beneath the stones. To add to their pain, the stones they carried collapsed and turned into rubble.

People, who watched the video, had their mouths hanging from shock.

What the hell is this!

'Is this a concentration camp or execution ground?'

In the distance, behind the working people, Serabourg was visible.

- This is the reality of sculpting.

- It was wise that I did not to select Sculptor.

- We need to raise money to donate to our unfortunate neighbors who started at the frontier kingdom.

Envy and jealousy towards players who were able to participate in the B rank quest for 1 gold was over.

*

Over time, blocks of stones were piled up at the tomb's construction site. The whole process took a lot of manpower and to cut and carry the stones from the quarry. The entire place was surrounded by all kinds of rocks enough to build the tomb!

Different kinds of stones were necessary to build the tomb of the King. The interior and exterior of the tomb will be built out of stones with different colors and shapes. If not for thousands of players who cooperated, it would have been impossible.

"We really did it."

"Heu-heuk I'm impressed."

Many players started crying from excitement. One of the hardest jobs they ever had to do was over. However, the tomb is yet to be built. It's the start of a full scale construction.

Klang! Klang! Klang!

The moment enough stones were accumulated, Weed started to work.

Using a hammer and chisel, he was smoothing the uneven surfaces of the stones and then using his sculpture mastery to shape them and place them on their permanent location.

Weed was lucky that he chose a simplistic design to build a large tomb. If he had attempted to make something of greater complexity, it would require more work.

"What kind of tomb is he building?"

All the players, who participated in mining and delivery of the stones were watching with interest.

While Weed was engraving the stones, other players helped piled up the completed product neatly to their designated places. Unexpectedly, this part of the construction went very smoothly, thanks to the help of the guilds in Rosenheim Kingdom.

Guilds, especially the ones from the center of the continent, were well developed and had larger manpower. Official guilds became a large group that made a lot of profit. Guild can save money and buy the ownership, or claim a market as their possession, which allows them to raise even more money and increase their properties.

If the guild has possession of a castle, they would have more possibilities of earning a bigger profit. Commercial taxes can be collected on a weekly basis and can be invested on various technologies to create more diverse local shops, and most importantly, purchase assorted good for bargain price.

In addition, local craftsmen would be able to start producing weapons and armors of greater quality and rarity. Therefore, most guilds invest all of their assets into trades, and craftsmen of those field, compete with each other.

The better the guild's business is going, the more players would want to join, and the wealthier the guild grew.

Some guilds became widely respected for their virtuous actions, benefiting not only them, but general population as well. Sometimes such guilds started from small villages, and end up building their own castle.

Other area, where guilds could direct their efforts was mining. Naturally, if they were to find a rich gold deposit during the work in the mines, it would not only improve the guild's wealth, but also the region's welfare in general.

However most of the mines were infested by dangerous monsters, so before guild could start mining, it had to gather forces to clear them out. Not only guild members were able to participate in the clearing of the mines, but even other player parties, given they have the guild's approval. In that case players

were getting a job to clear the mine in form of a quest.

No wonder the guilds, especially those from the center of the continent, were had a constant struggle with each other. But in Rosenheim Kingdom, guilds newly formed. This is the perfect situation to take advantage of!

The edge of the continent was mostly populated by new players, and they were the ones who created first guilds of Rosenheim Kingdom. Therefore, even if a guild was to discover an unoccupied mine, they weren't able to claim ownership, as they didn't have enough reputation points within the kingdom.

Those guilds didn't have much money, so for them, the unexpected opportunity to participate in the construction of the royal tomb with Weed was like a rain in a desert.

"We agree to any conditions."

"Leave it to us."

Before he distributed the work amongst guilds, he contacted his master by whispering him.

- Erm... I'm talking to Ika guild, should I share the quest with them?

- ...

Not long ago Ika Guild had ambushed and killed all the Geomchis. Of course Weed knew of that incident and decided to contact his master. For a few moments there was only silence. Then the unexpected response came:

- Give them work.
- Wouldn't it be better to refuse?
- No real man should be narrow-minded. Men should have a big heart and tolerance. Wouldn't that be a nobler act?
- If so, then...
- If they ask for work - give them work. Now excuse me, I'm busy.

Others wouldn't show such generosity as the Geomchi did towards the Ika Guild. They were enemies, who had killed each other. To show such generosity when an opportunity for revenge arises - is a really hard and noble decision. But Weed knew his master better.

'How much could they offend Master... If he doesn't want to use other people for revenge. He wants to avenge them in person... Only then will he calm down.'

Weed equally divided the work between guilds in Rosenheim

Kingdom. Then he proceeded to build the tomb with help from highly cooperative guild players.

At the base of the tomb, blocks were placed in a square, which was gradually growing upward. But every next level had smaller scale. The higher it went, the smaller were levels.

"Ah! This is..."

At that moment, people who were busy with construction, along with those who were hauling stones, became aware of the kind of tomb that was being built.

"It's a pyramid!"

"He's building a pyramid for the King!"

Once described as a scientific and technological architectural building, is now being constructed right in front of their eyes.

However, it was not a facet of the ancient myths and legends of a pyramid. The internal structure was much simpler, because Weed had no experience with construction such as this.

Sculpture mastery in game only assisted with the improvement of outer appearance and shape. It was no wonder that Weed didn't have any knowledge on the internal structure of a pyramid.

'How is this supposed to look like?...'

Weed had been thinking about it ever since he decided on the outer appearance, but he still didn't have an answer. Therefore, there were no labyrinth, secret passages, or any other mysteries.

Of course Weed could have gotten a map of internal structure of a pyramid from the internet. But it'd take a lot more time to recreate such complicated labyrinth system. That's why Weed decided to use his imagination.

When he was a kid, before his parents died, he remembered how they briefly lived in an apartment. 30 flat apartment! And from those memories, he modeled interior of the tomb.

It looked like a pyramid from outside, but from the inside, it was a normal 3-room flat with 2 bathrooms. In other words, an ordinary Korean flat. Of course, Weed wasn't planning to add a balcony or terrace. However, construction was already in progress and it was too late to reconsider.

The interior was so simple that the entrance passage and the left side of the room was decorated with nothing but stones that were already piled up. Yet other rooms and the bathroom were decorated with works of art.

While working, many people began asking questions. And Pale and girls were no exception.

"Is a bathroom really necessary inside a pyramid?"

"..."

"There's no water here..."

"..."

"Do dead need to take a shower?"

"Ahem! Minds of great artist do not follow common sense. How can ordinary people understand the thoughts of Da Vinci? Before you try and understand an artist's intentions, you should look at the flow and the essence of nature."

"Then you should install a bath too, Weed."

"..."

*

Inside the pyramid, there was a room for a coffin, a living room, and 2 other rooms for art works. The latter was provided by Mapan, who personally rushed over and purchased those items at a cheap price.

During the construction Weed had only spent 1600 gold on

ingredients for grass porridge. Only vicious businessmen such as Weed would be able to organize a large scale construction without having to pay their workers.

Even on the art works for interior decoration, he had spent 49,700 gold. He could have saved on the decorations as well, but decided that successful completion of the quest was more important.

'If I make a mistake I might fail.'

A simple monster hunting quest would always give him a second chance. If he was to die, he'd always be able to return in a day and start over. But this time he couldn't afford any failures. It's all or nothing.

He purchased the best and most expensive carpet and laid it out in the living room, and on the walls he hung paintings. And of course, he had also placed a few self-made sculptures inside.

However, the pyramid was still not giving off the vibe he envisioned!

The number of unused blocks was decreasing as the pyramid's height got higher, however he had a feeling that there was something still lacking.

Although the size was enormous and magnificent, it was still insufficient. The pyramid that was being built wasn't giving an

impression of it being a tomb of a great King who ruled Serabourg.

The tomb of a prestigious King should be elegant and insinuate great power. A simple tomb was far too inadequate. A tomb of a King should be iconic and easily identified. The tomb still lacking something essential to project such impression.

"Aha! That's what it's missing."

Weed ordered a huge natural rock to be delivered to the pyramid. Large rocks were placed on top of each other, making it almost as large as the pyramid.

He already had experience hanging down on ropes to create sculptures of greater height. However, the material was very different. Stone is harder than ice, so it was going to take a lot of work.

Hit, crack, and slice the rock!

For several days, without stopping for a break, he hung at a great altitude holding on his engraving knife.

Creating a gigantic statue wasn't complicated, it was rather simple. No elegant lines and fine details were needed! The statue itself was overwhelmed by its size.

For the head of the statue, he carved the face of Kind Theodarren, and its body was shaped into a lion. The design was

simple, but enormous in size. And this monstrous statue was carved out of the single rock.

*

Current King, Theodarren, had restored the peripheral Kingdom of Rosenheim, which suffered from constant monster invasions.

He won the war against an old enemy, Brent Kingdom, and had established and trained a large army, which became the foundation of peace and prosperity.

*

The King himself had told the tale with pride.

Weed remembered everything he was told. When you work on a sculpture, you can't base it on the outward appearance alone. The appearance is important, but the feelings the sculptor has put into his creation, were just as important. Because they are what they will pass on the essences that is portrayed by the object, to future generations.

Sometimes feelings have great power. Music, created by outstanding composers, can make people cry or laugh. Similar with books and paintings. If they were created without feelings, they are an incomplete work, and will be quickly forgotten.

King Theodarren told him a lot about his life, and Weed didn't

forget his stories. He was mistaken when he thought it was just a prelude to the quest. Only now, when he was working on the sculpture, he understood how important those stories were, and that he wouldn't be able to create a sculpture without them.

'In the body of a lion, swift, and versatile, yet a profound heart.

Longevity of the King. Embodying the aura of might that can overwhelm any audience.

When he makes his move, even the most formidable opponent trembles in fear because of their predator's menacing steps.

The Lion acts as a protector of the citizens of Kingdom of Rosenheim.'

This poem was included with the statue of the lion.

The statue of the Lion overlooking the pyramid represents King's final resting place. Finally, overbearing eyes were carved to complete the statue.

Ding!

Masterpiece! You created a Statue of the Lion Monster.

Created by a Sculptor with excellent handicraft skills, and the solidification of his sweat and effort. His fame and reputation will

be spread throughout the continent.

The statue of the Lion:

The statue of the Lion is made out of solid granite, and has a strong and courageous temperament. This statue, resembling King Theodarren, will bring prosperity to the Kingdom of Rosenheim.

Artistic value: 4,700.

Effects:

Those who access the statue will gain the Lion's Courage buff, increasing Health and Mana regeneration by 30% for a day.

Movement speed increased by 15%.

Magic resistance increased by 20%.

Maximum health increased by 15%.

Stamina increased by 20%.

All stats increased by 16.

Lion's Roar applied:

All monsters in the surrounding area will receive a decrease in their abilities and will lose morale.

Fighting spirit of players will increase when fighting near the statue:

This effect does not overlap with other sculptures.

Total number of masterpieces completed: 3

Sculpture mastery reached Intermediate 9th level. This allows construction of even more delicate and detailed sculptures.

Handicraft Skill reached Intermediate level 10, and transformed to Advanced level 1.

You gain a bonus when using hand tools and an increase in damage with all weapons.

You can now learn certain skills related to the craft.

Hand combat skills can now be learned regardless of profession.

New Skill: Mind Hand

Fame increased by 630.

Art increased by 16.

Endurance increased by 12.

Stamina increased by 6.

The Lion has been added to the list of the Wonders of the East.

Weed is the owner of the Lion. If life is given to the Lion, it will begin with a high loyalty towards Weed.

You have created a Masterpiece. You gain 1 point in each stat.

New Title! You earned a title of 'Artisan With Exceptional Dexterity'.

Granted for reaching the master level of Handicraft skill!

Honorable title for having extraordinary dexterity.

Granted only to the best artisan.

Weed, who was clinging on the lion's face, burst into laughter.

"AHahaha!" His spoiled rotten smile changed into a genuine one.

Ordinary people would always admire the first person to achieve master status!

In this case it was the Handicraft Skill. The marvelously complex hand movements, that can't be imagined by general public!

'I finally reached the advanced level!'

Mind Hand skill. It was obtained together with advanced level handicraft, so it must be exceptional.

Weed checked the acquired skill.

"Check skill, Mind Hand!"

Mind Hand:

After achieving a near-legendary level of dexterity, you can summon a "third hand" using your mind.

Using the "third hand", it is possible to manipulate objects and even attack enemies.

However, it is not possible for your "third hand" to use any skills.

Mana consumption per second: 2

For a small amount of mana, he will be able to summon an additional hand. It'd be able to hold a carving knife or other tools. When working on a tall statue, the skill would be very useful to him. But it can't be used to apply skills in battles.

'Depending on how I use it, it may be of a great asset to me.'

To become an adept sculptor, one has to triumph over constant challenges and overcome many difficulties. And having created another Masterpiece Sculpture brought unspeakable joy to Weed as received enormous amount of stat bonus.

Sculptors get stronger by adding up little bonuses to make one significant increase. Masterpieces, however, gave a much greater bonuses, as they were rarely produced, but it didn't make a great significant increase.

Creating a masterpiece also gave Endurance, Stamina and Art attributes. Although those stats did help to survive in a battle and create new artwork, it didn't give much benefit when it comes to battles unlike Strength, Agility, Wisdom and Intellect.

Those Attributes were only growing by 1 point. That's why, no matter how great the created sculpture was, it wasn't making him

much stronger.

*

While Weed was hanging from the sculpture, a large crowd had gathered near the base of the statue.

Carving a sculpture out of natural rocks was very difficult!

Most of the audience anxious and afraid, seeing as that Weed had stayed up there for a couple of days without food or drink, hammering on the rock.

It was a huge rock, so there wasn't any significant change in one given day.

However, their fear slowly changed to excitement, as the statue's shape was gradually being formed Until finally, the Lion statue was finished, radiating brilliance

Majestic and powerful! The embodiment of King of Rosenheim!

It also granted a variety of effects to those who saw it.

"My Stamina has increased!"

"My Health..."

"Everyone, check out your stats!"

Players were opening their Status Windows and staring at them in shock. Until now most of the players thought that they could only raise their attribute points with certain items or buffs from Mages, Priests and Bards.

Now they realized, that sculptors could raise stats as well. Some of them already knew about effects of sculptures, but none of them had ever seen the absurd amount of effects of the lion statue.

"All stat attributes had increased..."

"Even magic resistance!"

"A day! The bonus will be working for a whole day! I think all parties will be visiting this lion before hunt from now on."

"Hmmm... The Sculptor profession seems useful."

After seeing lion's statue people's impression of the sculptor profession were changed.

'I should befriend some sculptors!'

None of them wanted to actually change their profession to sculptor. However, after witnessing a sculptor at work, they

understood what they had to undergo.

No matter how alluring the sculptor profession was to them at that moment, no one actually wanted to put out the effort required. It was much easier to just get acquainted with one.

Yet, more new information continued appearing.

"Lion's Roar! It says it greatly increases the fighting spirit stat."

"What is the purpose of fighting spirit anyway..."

"Don't you know? The stronger level you are, the more your enemies' skills weaken. However, that works in reverse too. So the higher your fighting spirit stat is, the less your skills get reduced

Main reason for players gathering into parties was to hunt stronger monsters that they could hunt alone. The most common cause of such parties failing was their lack of fighting spirit. However even if it was high, it wouldn't ensure you a victory.

Usually, lower level players have to team up against the stronger monsters. However, with the increase provided by the statue, it allows the player to fight against stronger monsters on a more equal footing.

As the crowd buzzed about the stats provided by the statue, many of the Clans' message boards were overflowing with people talking about the Sculptor class.

- Guildmaster, I have found an amazing profession...
- Sculptor profession wasn't such a useless as we thought.

All the guilds started to make plans to recruit the sculptor, Weed. Meanwhile Weed was just hanging from the sculpture, overflowing with emotions.

Intermediate 9 Sculpture Mastery! Advanced level Handicraft!

Truly, the 'Artisan With Exceptional Dexterity' title wasn't given him for nothing. Usually game was granting more generic titles, like 'someone, who finished this task' or 'Someone, who hunted this rare monster'.

However, crafting skills had its own feature in assigning titles. The most important title could only be acquired by the best artisan on the continent. By the first person who reached the Advanced level in a certain crafting skills!

That fact the Weed was the first player to reach the advanced handicraft skill, it would be a small milestone in the Legend of Weed.

*

Pale greeted his friends and introduced Maylon.

"Hello. My name is Maylon. I'm a ranger and Pale's girlfriend."

"Nice to meet you."

Surka, Irene and Romuna greeted her with warm smiles as they welcome their new colleague.

Although Pale had a crush on Romuna for some time, as they were childhood friends, Pale found his true love with Maylon.

Comment: Really? Considering how he met her, the most he could fall in love with is her ass. (She was carrying a stone on her back in front of him! That's not very romantic...) - IcedLance

A man in love always looks confident and relaxed once he wins over his beloved. Romuna was first to notice this change and already knew what they were going to say.

"We haven't known each other for long, but we are in love."

"I am really glad I met Pale."

They said as they exchanged affectionate glances.

Understanding between lovers.

Suddenly Surka who was looking intently at Maylon's face exclaimed:

"Oh! Your face looks really familiar, have I seen you before?"

"Come to think of it, I think I've seen you before too..."

"Yeah. I've seen you lots of times... although your face is subtly different."

Irene and Romuna started staring at Maylon as well. They were sure, that they had met her for the first time in game. And yet, she still looked familiar.

Pale also started wondering.

"To be honest, I think I've saw you somewhere too."

Maylon fought away her hesitation and decided to reveal herself to them.

"Do you watch any programs associated with Royal Road."

"Eh? Oh! Come to think of it..."

"That's right, I'm Shin Hye Min."

After realizing that, Maylon's companions couldn't hide their astonishment.

"Sorry, I didn't intend to hide it, but didn't want to bother you. Didn't want to be subjected to prejudice..."

Maylon continued explaining, but no one was paying any attention.

"It's amazing to meet the anchor of one of the most Royal Road's popular shows."

"Didn't know program coordinators actually play Royal Road."

"But your face on the screen looks a little different."

"I know. I didn't recognize her at first too."

"Stupid. They apply a lot of make-up on television."

"Oh! I see. But you're still pretty, Unni!"

"Th... thank you."

A program host and an entertainer were slightly different. An announcer of a broadcasting station was a similar concept.

"Say, do you hear of any secret information, unknown to the general public through work?"

"Well, sometimes. I'm just a host, so I know a little more than everyone else."

"Does your company give you any equipment?"

"Rarely. But that does happen sometimes."

"Wow! I'm envious. So why do you like Pale."

"I just realized the moment i met him, that he was my man."

Then Romuna suddenly asked:

"But is it ok for a TV show host to play games like this?"

"Well, I do have to gather information..."

"Information... about the pyramid? We can ask Weed for an exclusive interview anytime if you want. Should we?"

"No, but thanks, I'll have to refuse."

Maylon smiled brightly.

"I didn't get close to Pale to gain something."

"Maylon, you..."

Pale was touched by Maylon's words and smiled.

"Don't look at me like that. It's natural. But talking about business, I'd like to ask Weed for an interview, but that might offend him."

"..."

At that moment Pale and Surka realized how mistaken Maylon was.

'That certainly won't...'

'She doesn't know Weed at all.'

*

Lately a lot of guild representatives were coming to the construction site to meet Weed.

At first they were bragging about the advantages of being in a guild, while they actively tried to recruit him.

"Our guild is the biggest in Rosenheim. In this kingdom there's no one more influential or powerful than us. You won't regret if you join us."

"We will not only buy your sculptures at a reasonable price, but pay you a daily wage. And if you ever decide to go hunting, we'll accept you into a party without delay and provide equipment."

"Don't you by any chance want to leave this cramped kingdom and move to the center of the continent? I know you already received many offers, but ours has the best conditions..."

All those representatives were looking at Weed with superiority. They promised various benefits, like power leveling to level 200. They automatically assumed that artisan professions were all low levelled.

But Weed wasn't an ordinary artisan. His level was a lot higher than those of other players of crafting related professions. Also in all the offers he saw more restrictions, than advantages.

All the guilds wanted to have exclusive rights to his sculptures, and if they were providing equipment for hunting, they demanded them returned. Even if he was to agree and take rare and unique items to the hunt, he could end up with more trouble, than benefits. Weed had only hunted in most dangerous places. Every battle could lead to his death, and as a result to the loss of items, lent to him.

And Weed's strategy in general was aimed at fast levelling and auctioning the expensive items. Guilds would be more of a hindrance in those matters.

"Sorry, but I can't take your offer." Weed had rejected every offer.

The better the benefits of the offer, implied to him that the restrictions were tighter.

Constantly making sculptures just to be let into some guild's hunting parties...

Never! He'd become more famous and sell more works for greater money in the future.

After getting all their offers rejected, guilds resigned and gradually calmed down.

'Anyway, he's just a sculptor. Moreover you can't increase the bonus by using other sculptures.'

'One sculpture isn't enough, is it?'

'This is a big sculpture, and you can't claim it all for yourself. Other sculptures with bonus effects must be big as well and it wouldn't be possible to carry them.'

'Effects only last for a day. We can't be returning every day to our guild to look at the statue.'

They decided to acknowledge Weed's decision, as they started to understand sculpture profession a bit. Players like Weed must be constantly in motion, creating artwork in various corners of the continent. It wouldn't be possible to stay in one place and just create items, like other craftsmen.

After finishing the Lion statue Weed switched back to working on the pyramid. A lot of things were already done, but it was still far from being complete.

The higher the pyramid became, the harder it was for players to deliver stone blocks to the top of it. They even had to make a huge ramp with dirt and sand, and a lot of players used it to slowly carry the huge stone blocks to the top of the pyramid.

Chapter 3: The Power Of Alcohol

The Geomchis were seriously considering changing their names.

"We've been wandering here for a month already."

"Yeah, let us be known as 'The Lost'¹ now. What do you think?"

Clueless beginners who have never before played videogames, they thought that they have already adapted to Royal Road. But they were mistaken.

Geomchis were more or less able to navigate familiar areas, but in the lands to the south of the Rosenheim Kingdom there immediately got lost and were wandering in search of a road. It was then when they heard news of Weeds return to the fortress Serabourg.

Master's eyes shone coldly.

"Finally I will meet the disciple in-game."

"Master, we also want to see Weed very much!"

All the students were of the same mind.

"Come on, let's go see him!"

The Geomchis then left for their long journey back to Seraboug's Palace.

"I think it's this way. Master!"

"We'll get there faster if we go this way."

"Huh? We passed this place earlier..."

Although the Geomchis started their way back to the moment Weed returned to Serabourg, it took them weeks of wandering to finally reach the capital of Rosenheim.

The first thing they saw upon arrival, where multiple players working in sweat.

Geomchi49 looked at them and laughed.

"That's not the way to apply strength."

Geomchi116 Also started laughing.

"To swing a pick-axe like that... That's science. Science!"

"They are so tired that they wouldn't even be able to hammer a

nail properly."

"We must help them"

"Whooo OooH!"

Geomchis were completely unaware of the rewards! They just took off their clothes, grabbed picks and started mining stones.

The average level of players who were busy at the construction was higher than that of Geomchis, and many had higher strength, agility and other stats than them. But that didn't matter to Geomchis as they wasted no time and began working.

"To swing a pick, you need not strength but skill."

"Let's show those damn rookies how it's done."

"Yeah. Leave it to us."

Weed, Pale, Surka, Irene, Romuna and recently joined Maylon were resting.

It was the 2nd time after Laviyas that they got together, the last time they weren't able to talk much as Weed was dragged away by

the soldiers to meet with the King.

The construction of the pyramid got on track, so they finally found the time to get together and talk.

Like the last time, Weed was asked to cook something tasty.

So now he was cooking kimchiyeon with lemonade.

At first one would think that they would not fit each other, but Pale, Surka and others were eating so fast that the food Weed was making was disappearing instantly.

Seeing his friends have such an appetite, he could not help but smile.

"Want more?"

"Yes!"

"10 servings please!" Maylon exclaimed and raised her hands with spread fingers in indication.

Pale and Surka looked back at her in surprise, and Maylon replied with a smile.

"After all, no matter how much you eat in Royal Road, you won't

get fat. So i'll eat as much as i can. It's hard to watch your weight. But you you are really full of surprises, Weed. Not only you are a skilled sculptor, but also a good cook. You'll be popular with girls."

"You bet, Weed is an amazing cook. He already cooked many tasty things for us, Maylon."

"Aw, Pale..."

Pale and Maylon's cooing was giving them goosebumps.

'Didn't know they're like that...'

The sugary-sweet voice of Pale... and the responding murmur of Maylon. That's a really sweet couple of cockroaches.

"I'm gonna be sick."

"And they're that way all the time."

Friends finished kimchijeon², and got up. They rested well and ate delicious food, but they couldn't spend more time idling, it was time to do some work at the construction of the pyramid or to hunt monsters.

Recently the four friends, were often sneaking of the construction site to use the benefits of the Lion sculpture and to hunt nearby goblins. Because of that they had to work real hard to

keep up with other players.

That made up for a tight schedule, but everyone in the group got almost five levels, and even Irene reached level 225 now. Pale, Surka and Romuna were now at level 232, just 20 levels behind Weed.

Slowly stretching Pale muttered with irony.

"For the last couple of days I had a nosebleed five times."

"Seven for me" Surka replied.

"But you do not feel dizzy at least," Irene said, and after some thought added

"The nose i just keep plugged. And in the subway, all the people around me look like goblins... I get confused if I'm in the game or reality."

"..."

Weed and others looked at Irene, dumbfounded.

'Good thing she is a priest.'

Surka was a monk so were she to get confused like that, she

might attack people with her fists. Thankfully, Irene wasn't a fighter, she was only supporting other players in the party with holy spells.

The past few day were difficult for friends, so in the real world, they were all greatly fatigued and in a state of disarray.

There weren't many people like Weed who are able to sleep for 4 hours a day and play Royal Road the rest of the time. Weed didn't feel any consequences of playing the game so much.

'Playing Royal Road is a hundred times better than, say, spend entire year working in a dusty cramped room, sewing doll's eyes or dyeing clothes.'

Weed was being shaken just by memories of that time. A tiny, dusty to the point that it was hard to breath room, and the dyes used were so dangerous that after working with it for a while red spots appeared on the skin.

Back then he had to quit working and go through a long, expensive treatment at a nearby hospital. It was then, when Weed realized that no matter what, you should always keep your body healthy.

Though most of his time was dedicated to Royal Road, in the gaps he was always doing exercises.

And to sleep well he was chanting in his head before going to

sleep:

'I can sleep well.'

'I will sleep well.'

'I'll sleep for 4 hours and wake up rested.'

'I'll have beautiful dreams.'

To an outsider it would seem like a meaningless chatter, but to Lee Hyun these phrases have become some sort of a prayer and had unexpectedly strong effect. He would sleep well, and filled with energy he would rush to new conquests in Royal Road.

To be honest, Lee Hyun was only able to sleep so well since not long ago. More than 10 years he was in constant fear of the loan sharks. In those circumstances there was no place for a good sleep.

Only after paying off the debt he now had the opportunity so save up money for his family. Because of that Lee Hyun was able to let go of his fears and to start enjoying his life.

After dinner, his friends decided to go hunt for monsters. What could be better than hunting with people you can entrust with your life?

But then they were approached by five men. That were

Geomchis.

"Take us with you."

Geomchi and the Four Geomchi's did not participate in the construction of the tomb.

It wasn't good for seniors' reputation to do the work of a student.

So they went to meet Weed and arrived just in time to see them preparing to go to hunt.

"Let us come too."

"We will not be a burden, believe me."

Not long ago, Geomchi's changed their profession to Martial Artists.

Thanks to that, they not only got a significant increase to their attack power, but also the ability to use all kinds of weapons in the game.

Most students were at 180th level, but Teacher with instructors had level over 200. All thanks to the fact that they were not engaged in any business, except for hunting, so they were raising levels at an amazing speed.

Besides, lately they started taking quests, though not very complicated ones, the ones that were easy to figure out. Such tasks mostly required to kill someone or to collect some items.

"Okay. Let's go together"

Weed, of course, was happy to that they participated. Royal Road was not a game where you could hunt with just anybody.

Unlike older video games that used mouse, virtual reality games were more focused on working together as a group. From the way you move and react to changing situations depend lives of other people in party.

That is why those who fought well in reality in Royal Road had more confidence in battle. Nothing can be done about it. As a smart man can always use their brains to make good decisions, a well trained one could use his good reflexes and fighting skill while hunting monsters.

In some way, virtual reality was closer to life. Because of this, sometimes those who do not know how to fight under difficult and stressful conditions, were considered a burden by party leaders.

Of course, most of players were starting without any knowledge about fighting, but they gradually gained experience and were becoming more and more skilled fighters.

It was during this period of 'learning' when it mattered most who

your friends were in game and reality. And how they treat you.

But all these problems of newcomers did not belong to the top five Geomchi's , as they were the best. First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Geomchi! True masters of the blade, in real life and in the game.

Weed had no doubts in their fighting abilities. Moreover, he was very eager to look at the techniques of Martial Artists.

Together with joined Geomchis they were a big and dangerous party.

They decided to rent horses as the hunting ground was pretty far away. It was suggested by Pale, and as his knowledge of Royal Road was vast, Weed had no reason to doubt him.

"Where are we going? What kind of place takes two hour to travel on a horse?"

"We're going to the gorge of Huntresses. They're monsters of level 280, they gather in groups of two or three and go hunting. It's a dangerous place. I only read about them, never actually been there.

After the Pale's words Weed recalled some information about Huntresses too. They were Amazon warriors, were good with swords, spears and whips!

"I see. And what kind of place is that?"

"A gorge. Once we go in, the hunt will begin. In fact, there is one feature about Huntresses. They never attack the moment players enter their lands. They always wait, closely watching trespassers, waiting until they reach the heart of the gorge, and then begin to attack the party in small groups. So until you kill all the attacking Huntresses, you won't be able to leave the gorge."

"So it's either we kill them all or they kill us?"

"Yes. This is a very dangerous place."

Thus, while having a conversation, they reached the gorge of Huntresses.

"Hmm... Looks dangerous" Surka examined surrounding cliffs warily.

Huntresses, dressed in black light robes, were hiding at the top of the cliff sides behind trees and bushes. Although they were trying to stay unnoticed, Weed and other members of the squad were alert so they could keep track of them.

"That's right, they don't attack."

"Yes. They will attack later, after all the reinforcements arrive."

"And if we attack them now?"

"It's useless. If we noticed them, it means that we are already surrounded."

"We have to prepare for battle."

Weed threw the bag on the ground and took out the tools.

"Weed, what are you doing?"

At the Irene's question Weed just reached out his hand.

"Give me your weapons and armor."

"Huh?"

"I need to prepare them before the fight starts."

"Eeeeeeh, ok."

Then Weed's friends recalled that his blacksmith and tailor skills were at intermediate level, so they began to approach him one by one and giving him their equipment.

It was time to do some work. Weed sharpened swords, polished armor and ironed clothes!

To Maylon his actions seemed mysterious, and she quietly asked Pale:

"What's Weed doing?"

When they decided to hunt and took a sculptor with them, she naturally thought that Weed was invited, because he was their friend and needed help to grow. After all, everyone knew that the people with crafting professions had a hard time raising their levels as they were bad fighters.

However, from the very beginning Pale, Romuna and others made Weed the party leader. His opinion was the most important.

Maylon worked at a TV-Media station, so she thought she could grasp any situation very quickly, but now she was very confused and did not understand what was going on.

Weed made it even more confusing, making all kinds of strange actions.

He ironed clothes, sharpened their swords and polished armor!

Pale with a smile explained it to her:

"It may be hard to believe, but Weed has intermediate blacksmith level."

"What?!"

To say that Maylon was very surprised would be an understatement. On the entire Bersa continent there were few blacksmiths with an intermediate skill level. She could not believe that the intermediate level sculptor has a developed blacksmithing skill as well.

"Well, don't be so surprised. In addition to blacksmithing skill, Weed has..."

Pale wanted to continue, but was a bit too late. Weed buffed the equipment of the rest of the party and turned to Maylon. A little hesitant, she gave him her bow.

"Wow! What a nice bow."

After seeing the weapon, Weed was surprised.

Unique Item!

'It could be sold for at least 10 thousand dollars ...'

Weed's eyes glowed with greed. It was not easy to get a unique object in Royal Road.

Maylon was very worried, and Weed, after struggling with his

greed for a bit, slowly adjusted the string and worked on the overall elasticity of the bow.

When Maylon got her weapon back, she became astounded.

Two-handed bow of High Elf Venus: Durability: 40/40. Attack: 75. Range: 16.

With a shot from this bow you can easily pick off the crows of misfortune. The string is made from the hair of High Elf. Brings good luck and reduces morale of the enemy.

Requirements:

Level 230

Agility 700

Only for Rangers

Effects:

Strength +15

Agility +20

Accuracy +60

Empower skill Quick Shot +25%

Burns 3 mana to enemy hit

Hit rate for slow enemies is 100%

Bow was in hands of a skilled craftsman:

Applied effects:

Strength +10

Attack +9

Agility +15

Accuracy +16

+10% skills empowerment

The firing range is increased by 5

"Wow!"

Maylon repeatedly checked her bow.

Weed just work a little on it, and the stats got increased by about 20 percent!

"So that's what the blacksmith with an average skill level can do..."

This bow Maylon got as a gift. Although the durability of a weapon was small, it was not a big disadvantage as unlike swords you didn't have to beat monsters with it.

"And now give me your clothes."

"But... It is made of fabric."

Maylon stared at Weed in confusion. Blacksmiths could only

work with armor and weapons.

"Do as he says."

Maylon trusted Pale but was still doubtful when taking off her clothes of rainbow fabric.

It was a very rare clothing made from equally rare fabric, sewn by a true master.

After taking it, Weed immediately recognized the item that he created and sold through Mapan's auction. Somehow it ended up in hands of Maylon.

Weed slowly ironed the creases and thus increased the protection attribute, increased the rate of health recovery and cold resistance!

"Incredible!"

Maylon's eyes widened in surprise, she was speechless.

Thus Weed improved everyone's equipment and greatly increased its attack, defense, strength and other parameters, which positively affected the overall strength of the party.

But on this Weed did not stop, he put everything back in bag and took out a cooking ware.

Surka awaited this moment the most.

"I'll make you steak this time."

"Wow!"

Although they have recently eaten, Surka reacted as if she has starved for weeks. She liked to taste new delicious food, but with no less interest she watched Weed cook.

The whole process of Weed's cooking was like magic. During frying fires were rising up high, as if to spoil the meat. But Weed closely followed the process, and gradually the smell of perfectly roasted steak began to spread around.

That smell, gave the party members a big appetite.

In fact, this was the main reason Pale and others were so eager to hunt with Weed.

'Looks delicious...'

'It's beautiful.'

Irene's and Romuna's eye got clouded. They were dreaming of how great it will taste.

'Wow! What a great smell..'

"Yes, the smell alone is 100 times more delicious than barley bread."

"Can we have some too?"

Five Geomchi's swallowed loudly.

"Eat first."

"We already ate Weed's meals many times."

Kind girls skipped their turn. Weed would still make more, so it was no harm letting Geomchis be first. The girls didn't know how wrong they were...

"These steak are so small."

"Yummy! So that's what the taste of the elite cuisine is."

Geomchi's ate meat as if to make up for all that time they had to eat the hateful barley bread.

First Weed wanted to prepare everything as it should be and put on one dish, but Geomchis were eating so fast that he had to barbecue whole slabs of meat.

"More! Faster!"

"It's ok, if the meat is a little raw, so come on."

The Geomchi³ was willing even to eat undercooked meat. That was true poverty. Be that as it may, all the meat cooked by Weed, ended up in the stomachs of Geomchis.

However, this did not stop them...

Having a feeling that something was missing, teacher smacked his lips a few times.

"Weed!"

"Yes?"

"You're great cook."

"Well, that's nothing to be particularly proud of. But if you get hungry, I'll cook something any time."

Geomchi nodded at his words, cleared his throat and said:

"Hmm, hmm! That was enough meat. But... After such a delicious meal, my throat gets especially dry."

"Before leaving Serabourg I took some water. Do you want it?"

Weed searched his bag and took out a bottle of water, but when he was going to hand it the Master shook his head.

"I didn't mean it that way..."

"What then?.. Was you talking about alcohol by any chance?" Weed asked after realizing what the teacher meant and he nodding his head in agreement.

"Well, not necessary... But do you have some?"

"Oh, you should have said so earlier."

Deep in Weed bags lay a supply of alcohol beverages. Mainly results of his experiments of making herb mixtures. Once his cooking has moved to a Advanced level he acquired the skill of making liquors, and Weed was trying to develop it as high as possible. Whenever he got suitable herbs or vines for preparing alcohol, he was buying everything he could and brew the beverages.

Food wasn't all about dishes. With a suitable accompanying drinks the effects of the food increased! In addition, alcohol not only increases the effects of food, but also raises strength and stamina attributes.

Unfortunately, unlike food, alcohol had to be prepared in advance, since the process takes much longer.

Because of that Weed dragged a bag of stock bottles with herbal liqueurs and wine.

"Good. Here, have this tincture and some snack..."

Weed quickly reached into his backpack and pulled out one of the bottles, and as a snack he got some pre-cooked slices of dried fish.

"Thank you, my student."

Geomchi, who did not expect that there will even be a snack, gladly opened a bottle and started to drink.

Looking at that, Geomchi² also approached Weed.

"Khm-khm. To be honest, I also have a dry throat."

"Yes. I was just about to get a bottle for you too."

Weed quickly got another bottle and handed it to Geomchi². And then, not waiting for a word from the rest of the Geomchis, he treated them as well. Since he already started giving out drinks for free, he should do so to the end with a smile.

In fact Weed anyway was going to treat all of them to one of the prepared tinctures before the fight. He wanted to see the Geomchis' profession in action and for this it was necessary to maximize their attributes, so they would show their highest performance in the battle.

'And the better they will fight, the easier the hunt will go. For rapid experience gain the performance of every party member was important.'

Weed handed glasses to Pale and his friends too.

"What, we can really drink it?"

"Of course. If you drink, your strength and health will rise a little."

The friends took a sip and saw their attributes improve.

Maylon was in a panic.

'How?.. What is... What kind of party is this?'

Due to her profession of a reporter Maylon was able to hunt with a lot of different people. Even with very well-known high-level players, or influential members of guilds. So she had a more than enough experience when it came to hunting.

But this group was denying everything she thought to be basic rules!

In this party a simple craftsman, a sculptor, was responsible for improving the characteristics of its members! And everyone considered this to be normal! Though usually, only bards, priests, and shamans were responsible for it.

It was a really unusual party combination. Maylon drank the hard liquor and observed carefully.

"Weed..."

"Yes?"

"Got anything else to drink? Let's try different drinks."

"It's..."

First Weed was about to refuse. He has put so much effort into making these tinctures, it could be said, that they were his treasures.

But the master said it with such a pleading voice ...

"A little bit, just a sip..."

If he asked directly, it would be easier to say no. But the teacher was sitting with such a pained expression on his face that it was impossible to refuse.

Then the second, third and other Geomchi's tried to dissuade their master.

"Master, you shouldn't do that."

"I'm sure Weed worked hard to make these tinctures."

"Well, I'm just going to taste it..."

"And our level is low as well. We should be grateful that we accepted in the party at all."

Although they pretended to stop their Master, their words clearly had no intention of doing so, because they also wanted more of Weed's beverages.

"Try these."

In front of the Master appeared a pile of bottles with something transparent, black, purple... One of them even had a snake inside, and it was the first Weed opened.

"Oh! This is Snake Soju3!"

Geomchis seized the bottle and started to drink.

"Endurance raised some more!"

"When you drink it, it gives you more energy!"

"Best tincture I've ever tried!"

Whenever the amount of snake soju decreases, Weed became more upset. Meanwhile, the Geomchis continued to drink it at a ridiculous pace. Weed had used money to purchase and make the soju, and was frustrated from losing money. Moreover, they could not afford not to be aware of their surroundings.

'Come on, the materials used cost just a few bucks ...'

Most of the ingredients he obtained in person. Like the snake he caught. And the ones he bought actually costed little. The bottle costed the most, Weed bought it for 1 silver, but it's not like it was going to disappear.

And what was there for him to worry about. As it is stated in a proverb: 'The rich are well in the hell as well.' Over the past few weeks Weed earned a huge amount of money, more than 70 thousand gold. When Weed was walking, coins in his bag were jingling loudly.

Most of the money he earned on the construction of the tomb. That is how things usually are in construction business. Huge sums

to build and endless subcontracts! And the saving of money by using cheap materials!

Once in the past when Weed was still a minor, he had illegally worked in construction and remembered the words of his older companions. Now it was time to use them!

Weed was given 100,000 gold for the construction of the tomb. And he was able to save 60,000 for himself!

'Unused knowledge - Is dead knowledge.'

Weed smiled with satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Geomchis had completely forgot about their promises, and grabbed new bottles of liquor.

"Oh, this is good!"

"Master, try this one too. It's delicious."

"You're right, it's addictive"

No one tried to stop the Geomchis. If in real life they looked like formidable fighters, and in the game, their bodies became deadly weapons. All of them had sharp eyes and heavy gazes, that were completely overwhelmed Pale and others.

Friends knew that the Geomchis should be stopped, but could not think of a way to do so.

"Hic... So good!"

"Master, you look better today. Oh, and why did you become the two of you? You split?"

"Look who's talking, whelp. There are four of you!"

"A-ha-ha-ha!"

They laughed loudly, and then started to force Pale to drink too.

"Come on. Real men should be able to drink a glass."

"I already drank one."

"Then, I meant two glasses! Here am I, there is the tincture, isn't the world wonderful?"

Pale tried to refuse, but could not resist the will of the Geomchis, and had to drink. In fact, he wanted to drink. Weed's tinctures were very sweet and tasty.

After Pale the girls' turn came.

"So, let's all drink together. Cheers!"

"Oh. Thank you. You guys seem more sociable."

"Ah-ha! Of course, drinking buddies always become good friends."

Everyone continued to drink together.

"Your name is Romuna? Oh, you're so outgoing and beautiful."

"Maylon, why are you so pale?"

"Oh! Thank you, and could you pour some of that?"

One glass became two, two glasses - three. It escalated quickly. Everyone's faces were red and constant laughter was heard.

Weed emerged from his thoughts and started to worry. Not long ago, he went through serious hardships in the province of Morata, and the behaviors of his companions looked strange.

'Wait a minute ... No, no, no!'

The worst thing possible had happened. His friends were still drinking when a message appeared in front of Weed:

Subordinate players in your party drank too much and are now dead drunk.

Their health reduced by 70%.

Strength and Agility reduced by half.

Players can not use skills, that involving wisdom, intelligence and mana.

While alcohol does wear off, they will experience dizziness and hallucinations.

List of drunken players:

Geomchi

Geomchi2

Geomchi3

Geomchi4

Geomchi5

Pale

Surka

Romuna

Irene

Maylon

They went into the gorge of Huntresses just for hunting, and now his friends got drunk and were fooling around.

"Oh, look, stars!"

"How mysterious..."

"Ha-ha-ha! It's great that we got out to this gorge and had a good drink. This is the life!"

Geomchi, Pale and all others have decided to lie down on the ground under the scorching sun.

Weed froze in shock at the sight. He wanted so much to see the real masters in fight, to see their skills and techniques. Looks like it will remain only a dream.

And to worsen it, at that moment Huntresses appeared.

"Intruders? This is our territory! You won't come out alive!"

Weed sighed hopelessly and cried out:

"I summon the Death Knight!"

Out of black fog appeared the one on whom he could always rely.

"You called, master?"

"Attacks Huntresses. This will be a fun hunt."

"Understood, master! But I want to tell you one thing..."

"What now?!"

"We have been fighting shoulder to shoulder for a long time. Because of the strength of our friendship, I was able to break free from the shackles of the spell and remembered my previous life. I, knight Van Hawk from Kalamor Kingdom, acknowledges you as my master. From now on you can summon me without the necklace, I will always answer the call."

A red necklace of life created by Barr Khan. Even without wearing the necklace, I can call forth the Death Knight. The red necklace of life transformed into a radiant white light.

"Wait a minute. So, I can now remove the necklace of life? And what about my experience points?"

If the Death Knight was not lying, then the necklace that was not giving any additional bonuses or effects could now be safely removed.

In fact, for Weed there was no difference in wearing a necklace or not. Like rings, necklaces in the game were very valuable items, and to get one of them with good effect was like trying to get a star from the sky.

Best necklaces were sold for enormous money, so until Weed gets something valuable himself, the dream of good jewelry will remain

a dream.

At the moment Weed was annoyed that he had constantly shared his experience points with the Death Knight. Twenty percent of the experience he gained was taken by Van Hawk!

"You can call me without the necklace. I recognize you as my master."

In this difficult situation a sigh of relief sounded. Shared experience is gone! Weed had become truly free!

Death Knight looked calmly at approaching Huntresses.

"I should kill them?"

"Yes, attack."

At Weed's order, Death Knight began to use his skills:

"Deadly blade!"

The threads of dark energy burst from the sword and stabbed in the approaching Huntresses. However, they were high-level monsters and weren't dying from a single attack of the Death Knight.

Along with Van Hawk, Weed started acting.

"Holy blessing!"

A blinding white light emerged from Agatha sword and covered Weed. This spell could only be used five times a day, but it greatly increased protection!

"Sculpting blade!"

Weed dashed to a group of Huntresses, wounded by Death Knight's spell.

"Silly boy!"

"We, the women warriors, will show your true power!"

Whips in Huntresses hands' started to move like snakes and shot forward to attack.

Weed gathered all his strength and rushed straight ahead.

Pa-ra-ra-rak!

Unfortunately, the Huntresses' weapons got him first. One of the whips coiled around his sword, and Weed struggled to free his weapon while avoiding attacks from other enemies. He spun and

dodged to the point where it seemed like he was using magic.

Finally he managed to free his sword, close in on one of Huntresses and landed a strike.

Critical Hit!

From this moment Weed no longer distanced himself from the Huntresses. Whips were only dangerous at a distance, and if he stayed close, they were quite useless.

Agatha sword on his right hand and Zahab's knife on his left, were constantly attacking the Huntresses. However, the level of his opponents was so high that they were dying only after a serial of accurate hits.

However, Weed did not despair. To survive and find the weak spot of the enemy that was his method of fighting! If an ordinary player of Weed's level met with such a strong monster, they would most likely die, because only those with vast experiences and a perfect body control like Weed, helped not to get trapped by the Huntresses' whips.

At this point, Death Knight defeated his opponent.

"Ugh! Good, you were able defeat her. Nice job, Van Hawk!"

"No, master. I like fighting," Death Knight replied out of context.

Not so long ago, in a cave of Basra he became too proud, for which he was repeatedly beaten, so he had to become smarter to get along with the Weed's character.

Together, they killed two more Huntresses. Just as Weed was about to pick up the items that had dropped, as more enemies arrived.

Pale was not lying. You would not be able to leave the Gorge until you defeat all the enemies. In the past, the battle were not easy, but as long as friends will not come to their senses, he will have to fight with all the constantly incoming Huntresses.

Shoulder to shoulder with death knights, two warriors against hundreds of warriors.

'Half an hour, half an hour to survive, and they need to wake up...'

After the first fight van hawk health fell by a quarter, and this had to be resolved.

"Van, from now on fight them one at a time! I'll deal with the rest."

"Understood, Master."

Weed handed the Death Knight some liquor and then rushed into battle.

Death Knight took over one Huntress, Weed took on the others. To avoid their whips, he had to constantly take Huntresses and the Death Knight's position into account.

Sometimes he deliberately took Huntresses' blows, realizing, that they will not lead to tragic consequences. A dangerous game with death where he could only rely on his own strength.

The fight went on.

Weed was stabbing with a sword, cutting with a knife, trying to get hurt as little as possible and use less mana. But no matter how hard he was dodging, Huntresses constantly, bit by bit, were diminishing his health.

The moment came when his life bar dropped below 100 points. At that moment Weed jumped behind the Death Knight, and started to apply a lot of bandages as fast as possible.

And though he was in hurry as never before, by the time he finished, Death Knight's health was also at a critical point. Weed had to quickly engage in battle to distract opponents from the heavily breathing Van Hawk.

The fight still continued.

Huntresses kept arriving. After every defeated group, came a new one consisting of 3-4 aggressive Huntresses. And to make matters worse, Weed began to get tired.

Even a player like Weed who had an enormous amount of health and stamina; accumulated with help of created sculptures and many missed strikes of enemies, could not fight without break. The sword in his hand was becoming heavier and his legs slowed down. Death was closer than ever.

He had to do something.

But at that point Weed and the Death Knight had spent all their mana. There was only one thing he could do that could save them in the current situation...

'I really do not want to get to use it...'

Weed jumped and pulled spice jars from his pockets.

One of the secrets of true chefs!

"Salt on wounds! Sauces in your eyes! Pepper and garlic juice!"

Weed was ruthlessly filling wounds of nearby enemies with culinary spices. For light wounds—Salt! For deep wounds—Soy Sauce! For eyes and nose—Hot Spices!

"Ahhh!"

"No, no... Please, not the salt."

"Ahhh! I have pepper in my eyes!"

Huntresses squealed loudly from terrible pains. Their health rapidly declined, as salt got into wounds. The pain was so intense that it was difficult to describe in words.

Secret technique of vile cook Weed! He had never used it before, as it required to spend valuable ingredients, but it allowed to break opponent's concentration and significantly lower their health by causing enormous pain.

Salt, salt, black pepper! Red peppers, pickled garlic!

Weed incessantly bombed surrounding Huntresses.

'I won't die here. I have no right to...'

Weed was not afraid to miss a day of playtime because of the death. No, he did not want to lose the skills he worked so hard to obtained. Even if all the mid-level skills will decrease by 5%, it will be a much greater loss than the loss of a couple of levels.

Weed gathered all the strength he had left.

He was running around, luring enemies and throw valuable spices at them. There was nothing else he could do. Weed used all he could. He had even used up the allowed five holy blessings of the sword of Agatha during the fight!

One way or another, everything will be decided in the next few minutes.

While Weed was close to death, jumping and spinning like crazy, in attempt to try and avoid attacks of angered Huntresses, Master and all the others came to their senses and slightly open eyes, fascinated by the ongoing battle.

"His fighting skills is superb."

"That's Weed for you. Whatever you throw at him, he won't die easy."

"Tenacious like a cockroach."

"If all were so, the profession of the priest in the game would become redundant."

Pale, Surka, Irene and Romuna looked at Weed with envy. How could they learn to fight exceptionally!

It didn't require a lot of intelligence to properly use skills, techniques, and spells. But to fight like Weed, relying only on simple strikes and body control, was really difficult. Even more so,

considering that in such battles, stamina decreases rapidly and it became very difficult to hit. And it was useless to try to fight at such pace, without rest, with constant arrival of new enemies.

Maylon also opened her eyes.

'That's some amazing sculptor!'

If all other were lying and being jealous, she could not even move from shock. What kind of sculptor can fight so well?

Her astonishment began since the moment Weed called the Death Knight. She knew that he was not a wizard, then he must have somehow managed to obtain an incredibly valuable item in game. He also was fighting a spectacular battle and used a lot of different techniques, which she as a reporter, had never heard about!

All in all, there were a lot of things to be surprised about.

"Good."

"And he really absorbed your teachings, Master."

Geomchi and Geomchi2 calmly watched Weed's every move. It was the first time they had seen him in a real fight.

"A little different from one in the real life, but still his reaction

was more than excellent."

"However, a swordsman, not only responds to the environment, but also adjusts to any situation and imposes in their battles."

"Hyun perfectly knows it all. Without a basic understanding, this level can not be achieved. Although he still has unnecessary movement, the fight as a whole is going well. Several years of training, and it would be difficult to imagine someone stronger than him."

In fact, the Geomchi's have long since regained consciousness.

Excellent warriors that got intentionally drunk... All this was planned by the Master. He wanted to know how Weed fights in Royal Road. To see him in a real sword fight. To keep things fair.

Ahn Hyundo was satisfied.

If Hyun refused to fight or panicked, he would have been very disappointing. If you follow the way of the sword then you have to go forward, despite any obstacles.

Royal Road is just a virtual reality game, but even so, inner qualities of players were important. Reliance only in battle skills, without courage, bravery and perseverance, it would be impossible to achieve high results even with weapons in game.

Some people, seeing the last attempts of Weed to survive in the

difficult battle, could not hold back any longer. Geomchi³, Geomchi⁴, Geomchi⁵, all jumped up and rushed to aid Weed.

All the others have started to get up.

"Fireball!"

"Deadly Shot!"

"Deadly Shot!"

Romuna start casting spells, and Pale and Maylon almost simultaneously shot arrows at the Huntresses.

"Holy Spirit! Use your power to save those who are hurt! Recovery! Let there be enhancement in your body. Blessed hand!"

Irene restored Weed's health, and cast empowering spells on everyone.

And so the real hunt began.

During the time the four friends have not seen Weed, they have changed. They were not those poor newcomers anymore who ran away in a panic from a simple wolf.

Harmonious attacks greeted each new group of Huntresses. It

started with arrows from Maylon and Pale, then fire magic spells from Romuna!

After these attacks, Surka engaged in battle with her fist. What Geomchis did was obvious without any words. And all of that under the tireless support of Sacred Magic from Irene.

"More incoming!"

"Wow, experience grows so fast!"

The mighty Attacks of Geomchis! Harmonious actions of Pale, Irene, Romuna, Surka and Maylon! And Weed with the Death knight!

Was there anything that could stop them?

[1] The Lost - Geomchis were directionally challenged.

[2] Kimchijeon - A variety of Korean pancake-like dish that is made of kimchi.

[3] Snake Soju - Made by placing a snake in a jar of distilled liquor (Soju) and aging it.

Chapter 4: Grades

Lee Hayan finished school and was walking home.

If she were to take a bus, she'd be home long ago. But she'd have to pay for it. Her thrift was almost as strong as that of her brother.

She only was taking bus if she was in real hurry. And even then she was pretending to be a middle school student. For middle school students ticket costed 200 won less than for high school students.

Sometimes though drivers were asking her:

“Schoolgirl...”

“Yes?”

“It's Dein high school uniform you're wearing, isn't it?”

“I'm wearing older sister's uniform.”

“Sister's uniform? Why?”

“To meet with my boyfriend from high school. Uncle, i really don't have time let's go already. Ok?”

While saying it Lee Hayan was usually bending her knees a little to seem shorter and make cute dimples on her cheeks. She was even flashing her eyes.

That was working because she looked younger than she was.

“Hmm, if so you can have a seat”

“Thank you, mister driver.”

After that drivers weren't asking any more questions and she was taking her seat with a smile.

‘Being a girl has many advantages.’

However girls also heeded a lot of things men didn't. Like underwear and cosmetics.

Lee Hayan was a natural talent in those matters. She was getting all those things gifted by boys. She was giving them advices on how to behave with girls or introducing them to cute friends of hers and was getting presents in return.

Thanks to that Lee Hayan was able to save her allowance and put it on a personal bank account. She wasn't Lee Hyung's sister for nothing.

“It should be arriving today.”

She hurried home and checked the mailbox. The GED report card that she’s been waiting for several days now finally arrived. In it were results of Hyung’s exam.

“It’s finally here.”

She could have probably checked results over the internet, but she looked at the report card nevertheless.

Korean: 75

Social science: 90

Math: 65

Science: 55

English: 65

Ethics: 40

Total: 390 Average: 65

Total above 360 and none below 40 meant success.

“Now brother graduated from high school.”

Lee Hayan was wiping off her tears and smiling. The hard feeling she had all this time disappeared. Every time she was going to school she was sorry for Lee Hyun. She knew how he was earning money. Many times she was almost crying when eating food, earned and cooked by her brother.

She folded the letter and entered the house.

Grandmother's condition improved, but she hasn't yet recovered, so she was still in hospital. So Hayan and her brother lived alone.

Hyun was still in the capsule. That was because today she came back earlier than usual.

“Well, I guess i'll clean up the house.”

Hayan Cleanly swept the house, cleaned the dust and washed the dishes.

“The plates from the breakfast are still here. Come to think of it, brother started to go to the dojo and return tired again, like at that time.”

The time when Lee Hyun was preparing for Royal Road!

For almost a year her brother lived like he was possessed. He found and studied all the works on virtual reality and collected as much information on Royal Road as he could. At the same time he trained his body and learned to fight.

24 hours a day was literally not enough for him.

Her brother slept about 3-4 hours a day, yet still found time to prepare meals for the family.

When he first started to go to the dojo she was terribly upset. His hands were covered by blisters and body bruised. He was coming back exhausted and falling asleep right away like he was dead.

Those memories alone were making Lee Hayan depressed.

At such moments Hayan was trying to distract herself with work.

‘Now I’ve got to study.’

To get accepted to ‘Korea’ university.

That was her most important goal right now.

At first she didn’t want to go to that university. After all it was not a matter of studying in the most prestigious university but of getting all the necessary knowledge. At least that was the case for

Interior designer, which was her desired profession.

But Lee Hyun wanted her to study in ‘Korea’ university. And for her brother, who sacrificed so much for her, she should at least be able to study hard. Her goal was to get a full 4-year scholarship!

But that wasn’t her only aim. After graduating from school and getting the scholarship, she was planning to start earning money as a private tutor.

*

“Granny, brother’s report card arrived!”

That day Hayan couldn’t hold her joy and ran to the hospital to give grandmother the news.

“Really? So did he pass?”

Grandmother’s face was tired but cheerful.

“Yeah! He did! Look at his grades. Apart from Ethics all the grades are high.”

“That’s fine. What’s important is he’s got a smart head.”

Although some could interpret it as ‘His head is smart, but as a

human he is a failure'. But Hyun's family knew well what he had to go through in last 10 years, so they never doubted his human qualities for a moment.

Grandmother was still looking at his grades.

"He really did it. Before I died..."

"Huh? What're you talking about, granny? Our happy life has just started."

Lee Hayan reassuringly took her grandmother's hand.

*

Every morning Lee Hyun was going to the dojo.

To exercise his body and to learn fencing from Ahn Hyundo were his two main morning activities.

"Come in."

"Congratulations on passing the exam!"

When Lee Hyun entered the dojo Ahn Hyundo, instructors and almost all the students were waiting for him. They were ready to celebrate Hyun's graduation from high school.

“So he’s got a high school diploma now, eh?”

“I used to studied hard in high school too, but...”

Ahn Hyundo got surprised by insructors’ envy.

“What’s with you lot? Didn’t you go to highschool too?”

“No, we left it early to train with sword more.”

Instructors lived only to train with swords.

Ahn Hyundo nodded.

“So that’s why you’re so simple.”

“That’s...”

They greatly respected their teacher but his last words hurt them.

‘At least we finished middle school.’

‘You didn’t even go to elementary school yourself...’

However Ahn Hyundo had a doctor's degree. World's leading universities granted him an honorary doctor's degree in recognition of his kendo skills. But actually he only ever went to the kindergarten!

There the child Ahn Hyundo have beaten many of other kindergarteners, for what he has been punished often.

‘On the day he got accepted to elementary school he has beaten up neighbourhood bullies with a wooden sword...’

‘They spent 16 weeks in a hospital I think? And the 7-year-old who beat them was taken into custody.’

‘So he never got to enter the elementary school...’

Instructors knew about it, but kept silent.

Ahn Hyundo was following the path of a sword since childhood. Days were passing by but no worthy opponents appeared, so he had to spend time meditating or playing Go, However even without any opponent Master was constantly improving his mind and body in numerous daily trainings.

Royal Road was taking Ahn Hyundo back to his childhood. He was able to fight with strong opponents, high level monsters. The long forgotten feeling of being alive, constantly improving, returned to him.

It seemed like his childhood dream had finally started to come true...

“Ahem... Master...”

With a little hesitation Lee Hyun asked:

“My sister came to watch our training today. Do you mind?”

“So it is? Of course, she’s welcome...”

Ahn Hyundo gave his permission without a second thought. Most of the apprentices were professional swordsmen. Of course bringing in talented people from various places was encouraged as well. But general public or young kendo students sometimes trained in dojo too.

“Okay now, let’s start the training. Line up!”

After a short celebration all the students and instructors, including Chung Il Hoon took their places.

“Today we’ll start from an hour of basic training and then spar.”

“Yes!”

The usual morning routine. Students brandished their swords

with swift and accurate movements.

“Then I’ll go get my sister, Master.”

“Okay.”

Lee Hyun left the dojo and headed towards school gates. They didn’t have cellphones, so they just made an appointment at a certain time.

“Brother!”

As it was sunday and hayan didn’t have any lessons, she was waiting at the school gates, dressed in casual clothes. Her skirt was barely covering her knees and short hair were swaying with the wind.

Her friends came with her.

“Hello everyone.”

“Hey. You did a good job at the festival.”

Those were Hayan’s friends!

Lee Hyun replied with a shrug:

“Eh... Yeah.”

“Well then, let’s go. Come on, brother.”

Hyun nodded in agreement and led them to the dojo. The moment doors closed behind them, all the students inside reacted vigorously.

“Oh, girls!”

“Schoolgirls!”

“Wow, high school girls came to a place like this...”

“They’re pretty.”

The unexpected happened, girls came to the men’s den. All the trainees suddenly started working harder. The strength and speed of their strikes raised significantly.

*

Today the training was really hard.

Lee Hyun left the dojo and, as he didn’t want to spend money on a bus, he decided to run all the way home. Running was another good way of maintaining good physical condition.

‘I graduated from high school...’

Hyun was running with a smile on his face. Maybe he didn’t get to go to high school all the way through, but now he would be able to proudly say that he graduated it.

‘Granny will be very happy. And Hayan...’

Since their parents died Lee Hyun was worried most about his sister. When she was a child she was unusually timid and scaredy. Their complicated family circumstances forced her to grow tougher.

“I wouldn’t be able to continue replacing her parents forever. Probably a few more years...”

The biggest dream of Lee Hyun was for his sister to meet a decent man and marry him!

On the wedding ceremony he’d take the place of her father and be the one to bring the bride to the the groom. Since early childhood he was familiar with the role of a parent and was used to taking care of his little sister. And when the moment comes when the groom will take the bride’s hand Lee Hyun will become free.

He never actually thought of what will happen afterwards. Every day he had to struggle through many hardships to try and earn even a little money. He didn’t have time to think about such

distant future.

So only when his sister will finish the university and marry will he be able to relax and start living for himself.

‘However...’

Lee Hyun laughed bitterly.

Hayan must meet a really good guy.

With her current grades she would be able to easily get into ‘Korea’ university and get a good job after graduating from it. That, coupled with her good looks, would make it possible for his sister to come together with the best men.

But if on her wedding she will be led by her brother, who barely graduated from high school, that might embarrass her.

‘I’m so ashamed I’m uneducated...’

Lee Hyun started to worry that his poor education might become a disadvantage for his sister and interfere with her life.

Then he saw Great Society Rehabilitation Center!

He was just passing it on the way home. In addition to its stately

appearance it was filled with state-of-the-art equipment.

‘I had been diagnosed there once. And if I manage to become a doctor there my sister would be proud.’

*

Last few days weren't so easy for Dr. Cha Eunhee.

She used hundreds of various treatments, trying to return Jeong Seoyoon to normal state. And Royal Road was her last resort.

Virtual reality games are known to grant emotional stability. They relieve stress by allowing to satisfy unfulfilled in reality desires. Traveling between reality and virtuality helps to fade the painful feelings.

Cha Eunhee hoped that it will help to save Seoyoon from her mental obsession.

Every day since Seoyoon started playing, Cha Eunhee was watching her playing records to be able to examine her psychological state better, than any test could show, as in the game Seoyoon had to constantly make decisions by herself and interact with the environment.

All the Seoyoon's actions in Royal Road were recorded in the capsule. That was private information, but as Seoyoon's doctor Cha Eunhee had access to it.

First recordings of Seoyoon's hunt were encouraging.

“This way she'll recover in no time!”

The initial tendency was positive.

Even though she never laughed or talked to anybody and was very withdrawn overall. She started to hunt and the desire to hunt was a display of greed.

Cha Eunhee thought that her desire to become stronger and acquire better items will make her more lively. That such 'human' behaviour would certainly make a positive impact on treatment.

But with time her expectations waned.

Seoyoon was just hunting. She was going to places where monsters gathered in large groups and fought them. Fought fiercely, to the death, like a berserker.

And she still wasn't talking to anyone in Royal Road.

‘But wasn't there a positive change?’

In Seraburg got acquainted with a fighting instructor. They weren't very close, but it still was a huge breakthrough. They were eating together and she listened to him talking.

‘Just a little but she’s reacting...’

The monster hunt was a good sign as well. Closed people usually become secretive and suspicious. Sometimes they even start acting like a child with superiority complex. Thankfully Seoyoon’s state wasn’t at such level yet.

When people endure a great pain, they often start to feel sad or scared afterwards. To threat such residual state fighting was a great medicine.

“Huh, still a long way til she’s completely healed.”

Cha Eunhee sighed deeply.

After leaving Seraburg Jeong Seoyoon headed south where she continued her endless hunt.

‘How long will you remain locked in that state?’

Jeong Seoyoon wasn’t just a patient for her, but more of a little sister, as they knew each other since childhood. Their parents were friends so they were meeting often, little Seoyoon was always calling Cha Eunhee older sister and following her around.

But now she wasn’t neither laughing nor speaking any more. And Cha Eunhee was doing all she could to return her to normal,

cheerful self.

Some parts in the recordings were surprising her.

“Why is there a statue of Seoyoon in Baran village?”

It seemed that Seoyoon didn't notice it, but the statue of softly smiling guardian deity of the village was her splitting image!

The face of statue of Freya must have been based on Seoyoon.

The beauty of that smile was making Cha Eunhee dizzy.

*

Seoyoon was continuing to hunt and move deeper into the southern part of Rosenheim kingdom. All the more people were coming to southern part of Rosenheim kingdom, and in order to avoid them she had to move deeper little by little.

Hunting monsters such as Dark Ghouls and Blood Ravens.

However the once low, population of southern region was constantly growing. Players had yet to come to dungeons and hunting grounds used by Seoyoon, but it was already bothering her.

‘I can’t stay here any longer...’

Seoyoon decided to leave the south of the Rosenheim kingdom.

Originally she started playing at the center of the continent, slowly making her way south towards Rosenheim, however having come this far south she realized, that there are no free lands further ahead.

‘To the east... Where there’s no players...’

Seoyoon decided to go to Lands of Despair.

*

The construction of the pyramid became the hot news of Royal Road. Most of the rumors were spread by the people, directly involved in the construction.

The pyramid almost instantly appeared on the web-sites. And then several journalist teams were sent to Weed by various media sources. They wanted to record all the stages of construction, from the initial concept to the final result.

Of course the report about the pyramid could fit in a small article, but reporters wanted to spotlight the pyramid, created by player's effort alone in detail. To show players' feelings, their hard work, that made the construction of the pyramid possible. And they had to do it from the beginning to the end, from the moment

the quest first appeared, as that was the way great history is written!

The pyramid, built by thousands of players' hard work!

The TV producers were already thinking about making a show, where famous actors and showmen would be building their own pyramid. They thought that audience will be interested in whether someone else will be able to complete such an impossible at first glance task.

"We'll pay you a million won."

"If you agree to work with us, we'll pay you 2 millions!"

Every day Weed received such offers, but he was refusing them. However once he got an offer, very different from others. The Korean Ministry of Education decided to launch an advertising campaign of textbooks, and wanted to involve the pyramid in it.

And they offered seven million won!

Weed accepted it.

*

The hunt in the Huntresses' gorge was getting livelier with each passing day.

Though their party didn't have the mandatory warriors or paladins, the high level of cooperation between members allowed them to quickly demolish the amazons and earn lots of experience points. During past few days Weed received 7 levels and reached a total level of 266

Fighting together with Geomchis was incredibly pleasant. He would continue hunting with them, but the construction was nearing it's end and he just had to attend to it.

The moment the last stone fell into place Weed received a message

Ding!

You completed the construction of the tomb for great king Theodarren.

Feeling the approaching death, King decided to build a marvelous tomb for himself and appointed the most famous sculptor of the continent to the task. And now the tomb is complete.

Receive your reward from king Theodarren.

But hurry to do it before his death.

"It's finished!"

"Hurray!"

Numerous players around the pyramid were shouting happily.

For the first time so many people gathered in such a backwater kingdom. Every player mined or delivered at least 1-2 stone blocks and contributed his part of sweat and effort to the construction of the tomb.

Weed headed to the royal palace.

The tomb was complete all that was left was to report to the king and receive the reward.

The king met him in the throne room like the last time. He looked even older and the progress of his illness was evident.

Following the etiquette, Weed knelt before the king.

"Your Majesty..." - he started talking, but was immediately interrupted by the king.

"Stand! Such renowned master deserves more respect than that. Besides all this etiquette makes me uncomfortable."

"No, your Majesty."

Weed wasn't intending to get up, but the king gave order to his knights and they got him on his feet anyway. Weed noticed, that king's attitude towards him significantly changed since their last encounter.

"You have my gratitude. Thanks to you, I finally have a place for my final rest. You are a great sculptor. And I am very curious at what was your thoughts, when you was building the tomb."

"I was thinking about all the hardships your majesty had to endure during your life."

"Yes... I vanquished many foes to defend my kingdom. And now, after my death I'll get to the very depth of hell where I will suffer for eternity."

"Not at all, your majesty. Your life passed like a firework. The one who's not scared by the flame and tries to catch it might get burned. But you were burning yourself to illuminate everything around you. Your bright fire was warming and protecting Rosenheim for a long time. And now you will be able to rest in a comfortable place and watch your kingdom prosper."

The King was greatly satisfied by those words.

"I don't regret at all that I entrusted this task to a sculptor, whose name was spoken of by so many. You prepared a marvelous resting place for me, far more than I have expected of you. So go now, get your promised reward."

You successfully completed the quest.

Fame increased by 690.

You received 2930 reputation points of Rosenheim Kingdom.

Level up.

Level up.

Level up.

Level up.

Level up.

Five levels and 2930 reputation points with the royal family!

The King continued speaking:

"All the others, who assisted the construction of the tomb will receive their appropriate rewards. Your service to the royal family is great, we wish to reward you. What is it that you wish?"

The exciting moment, that Weed was imagining so many times has arrived.

'2930 points... I could get a rare or even unique item from royal treasury.'

The sword of Agatha was a good item in many ways. It increased

the Faith attribute, increased Health recovery and even allowed to use blessing 5 times a day. But still the sword, forged by Order of Dreya had low damage stat.

Weed wanted a sword!

The best one possible.

However he had to think about completing the quests he already had...

'Even the best sword in the world won't help me in the Lands of Despair.'

Weed made a decision and said:

"Your Majesty, I have got a task from the Order of Freya. Soon I will have to go against the necromancers, worshiping the dark god Beelzebul. The Order learned, that something evil is being prepared in Lands of Despair, and my task is to deal with it before necromancers gather too much forces. However, to my regret I don't have enough men to complete such an important task. That is why I request assistance of brave warriors of Rosenheim."

The King carefully listened to Weed and seriously shook his head.

"Lands of Despair... I heard there are refugees living there, who were chased there during the era of strife and war with dark elves. During my reign I have sent my troops twice to those hostile lands,

but not a single man has returned. For that reason I ordered a high, thick wall to be erected, to prevent the evil of that place from invading my lands."

"That's how it is..."

Only now Weed started to understand, that that place was even more dangerous than the province of Mora!

But it was not the time to give up. The quest is an adventure. And until his experience proves, that this mission is impossible, nothing will stop him from trying. As it is often said, 'it's better to regret doing something, than to regret not having done it'.

While Weed was lost in thoughts, Theodarren quietly continued:

"In such a dangerous, unlawful place you'll need loyal people. I'll provide you with soldiers. But I ask you that you treat them with respect and not let them be killed in vain."

He'll have to spend reputation points on soldiers. That decision almost made Weed cry.

‘Anyway, going there with only priests and hoping for a miracle would be a suicide. The completion of the quest is more important than any unique items...’

However even after taking that decision, he couldn't help but try to scrounge something valuable.

“I treasure my memories of Rosenheim Kingdom so much, that I wish I had some kind of memento of it. If your Majesty doesn’t mind, a sword would be a perfect for that.”

Right words, said at the right time.

The King nodded and ordered one of his advisors to lead sculptor to the training grounds.

On the way Weed was inventing thousands of excuses to take the best possible weapon from the armory. He recalled his hunt in Lair of Litvarth and his quest in the province of Mora. He had to endure so much to finally get here and get an opportunity to receive something really valuable.

To come through all that suffering to spend all the points on soldiers?

Never! Weed ought to take at least somewhat valuable item for himself.

Advisor led him to the training grounds, where multiple warriors were training.

“By the King’s order you are allowed to take knights and soldiers to aid you in your mission in the Lands of Despair. Pick them yourself.”

Knights of Rosenheim were dressed in shining silvery armor. Their horses were very clean and looked to be tended to well.

Please pick warriors using your reputation points.

After the window appeared, numbers started appearing on knights' chests.

‘Looks like it’s their value in reputation points.’

Every available knight or soldier had a price. He had to chose carefully, spending points only on really necessary soldiers.

First Weed carefully examined all the knights.

They were gathered in a few groups. There were Scarlet Knights, known for their strength, White Knights, known for magic and Royal Knights, who served king personally. The latter had 280th level.

Without a second thought Weed stopped his choice on them. Personal knights of the king were the best fighters of the kingdom.

‘In such dangerous lands I’ll need good support...’

Weed approached closer and saw numbers on their chests. They started at 30 and went all the way up to 100 points per person.

The reputation point system was one of the reasons the tyranny of guilds in Royal Road was reduced. With it even solo players and small parties were able to complete quests and accumulate reputation points of kingdoms and other powers of Royal Road. And in case they need help, to do a quest for example, they didn't have to look for a guild any beg for it. They were able to hire an army from some king or aristocracy.

While walking around the training grounds, Weed reached a corner, where a great number of various armors and weapons were piled up. Swords, spears, axes, bows, clubs and maces, there were too many kinds to list them all.

Sword alone numbered more than a hundred. And of course every item had a price in reputation points above it.

Old and rusty ones were cheap, just 2-3 points. But the good ones were much more expensive, 1500-2000 points.

So if he picks a lot of soldiers, he would get a poor weapon, and if he takes a great weapon, he'll have few soldiers. Weed faced a difficult choice.

'I worked so hard to get these points... I just can't spend them all on soldiers.'

If an NPC were to die in combat, he would be gone for good. But even if none of them dies on the quest, Weed will still have to return them all back. But the weapon will stay with him even after he finishes the quest. He would even be able to sell it for cash.

After giving it a lot of thought, Weed decided to pick 10 Royal Knights. When choosing them, he was immediately giving them new names.

51, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 98, 99, 100!

Of course Weed will remember the faces and names of knights, who he spent his hard-earned reputation points on.

“It looks like the King values you high, so I will obey.”

“I don’t like it, but I can’t go against King’s order, so I will follow you.”

Knights weren’t hiding their disapproval. Straightforward, rude and displeased statements were directed at Weed, but he ignored them and proceeded to pick the weapon and ordinary soldiers.

‘I should pick the best weapon possible and then spend the rest of the reputation points on infantry. I can’t let my points drop low enough that I wouldn’t be able to pick the sword I want.’

First he examined the decorated swords, covered by ornaments. However he didn’t like any of it.

‘Useless stuff. More of a work of art than a weapon.’

Unfortunately he wasn't allowed to check the weapons' stats when choosing, so he had to rely on his intuition and experience.

Good thing, that in free city Somuren he had a chance to thoroughly study weapons and learn to estimate their value by their looks. His experience as a blacksmith was helping as well.

Weed was trying to find a sword, containing the largest amount of mithril. And when he found one he picked it with a little doubt.

“Identify!”

Sword of Cold Loteu

Durability: 150/150.

Damage: 68-75

This sword belonged to Loteu from Niffleheim Kingdom, the leader of the mercenaries from the northern part of the continent. It contains the power of ice.

Requirements:

Strength: 600.

Level: 250.

Effects:

Strength +50.

Agility +10.

Leadership +20%.

Bonus frost damage +30.

Every attack slows the opponent.

If you take a profession of a mercenary, you immediately get silver status.

“Not bad at all.”

Weed spent 1700 reputation point on the sword and was satisfied with it. Even though its effects were worse than those of Sword of Agatha, its damage was a lot higher. And if you take into account the sharpening bonus, this sword was easily best of what he ever had.

After taking the sword he had 541 reputation points left, that he was going to spend on hiring soldiers as well. Weed continued walking around the training grounds and to his surprise he noticed a familiar faces.

“Chief!”

Becker, Hosram, Buren and Dale. Soldiers from his raid to the Lair of Litvart. Old friends.

“You are here too?”

“Yes, the areas around capital started to get invaded by monsters and we were called back to patrol and hunt monsters.”

The four soldiers became captains long ago and were in charge of their own troops of hundred people.

“We knew you will come back someday.”

“Yeah, we are so happy to see you again, Chief!”

Buren and dale couldn't hold back their joy. During their hunt in the Lair of Litvart they became really close to Weed and were truly happy to meet him.

Weed considered himself lucky.

In the upcoming mission he will need reliable soldiers like never before!

“I take you with me, guys. Come on, we have a lot of work to do.”

After picking Buren and others together with their 400 soldiers Weed had only 3 reputation points left.

Advisor carefully examined all the picked warriors and said:

“It is desirable that you return all the knights and soldiers intact.”

Weed decided not to respond. However cruel that sounds, but he was picking them to fight. There were a lot of battles with dangerous foes ahead of them, and Weed believed that losses were unavoidable.

Of course he wasn't intending to let his hard-earned soldiers die easily, but he wasn't going to keep them behind also.

However the advisor continued:

“If you keep their lives, the royal family will recognize your merits again. And if you return them stronger and more experienced, King and other aristocrats will be very pleased.”

Advisor's words could be interpreted as a promise to refund all the reputation points, spent on the returned soldiers and increase them for every soldier, who raise their level in upcoming battles.

‘If I knew this would happen, I would pick a lot more soldiers...’

In the very end among the soldiers Weed noticed Docke, the instructor from training hall. Not so long ago he was promoted and now he was training knights in the palace. Also there was Midvale, the knight, that Weed was accompanying to Lair of Litvart. However he didn't have enough points for either of them. Besides each of them costed more than any other knight.

‘Too bad. Well, hopefully i’ll have another opportunity...’

Weed finished his business at the palace and headed to the Order of Freya, accompanied by the soldiers he hired.

*

At the entrance the highest church officials were already waiting for him.

“Are you ready to depart?”

“Yes.” - abruptly replied Weed.

Behind his back were knights, Buren, Becker, Hosram, Dale and four hundred of simple soldiers. All of them were a little tense, as they didn’t expect to be entrusted with such an important mission.

Even Royal Knights rarely participated in quests of such high difficulty.

High priest said:

“The promised 50 priests are already waiting at the portal.”

“We’ll show you the way.”

The priests of Order of Freya. Weed greeted them and inspected carefully. There were many bearded men in robes, but much to his surprise there were a lot more priestesses. And all of them were striking beauties.

Soldiers were looking at them wide-eyed.

“Woah!”

“Now I feel more encouraged, Chief!”

From a single glance at the priestesses the fighting spirit of Becker and other soldiers shot sky high.

Weed stepped on the portal at the head of a great army. But he was only able to command 50 priests of Freya. Royal Knights, Buren, Becker and others will be independently evaluating the situation and make their own decisions.

“Freya bless you!”

High priest and others recited a prayer and the portal started to glow.

When the glow disappeared, Weed and others were already far from Rosenheim.

*

Pyramid quickly became one of the most visited places of Rosenheim Kingdom. Every day more than 40 thousands people visited it.

Of course most of them were coming not to look at works of art, but to receive the buff of Sphinx statue.

“Wow! Great.”

“True. That’s crazy, to build a pyramid here...”

“I saw a movie about the construction. That was really cool, I only came here because of it.”

But to the surprise of those who came here for the first time, besides the famous Sphinx statue they found there other sculptures of gazelle, kangaroo, deer, rabbit and other low-level monsters with sad expressions on their faces.

Looking at those sculptures many players felt guilty as in the beginning they were slaughtering great numbers of those harmless herbivores.

So it was no surprise that after reading the engraved words their hands were reaching to their pockets.

For looking at the statue pay as much as your heart tells you.

All the collected money will be donated!

We will use them to help those in need.

Every visitor was leaving a copper or silver coin.

Chapter 5: Village Of Exiles

Like always, today Lee Hyun woke up early and proceeded to doing his usual chores.

First he visited the Dark Gamers Union website and started reading latest messages.

As Choi Junghoon said, the website had plenty of information about quests, dungeons, crafting skills or even trading routes. And of course, as it was a website for Dark Gamers, most of information was about items.

Hyun Lee had 'C' access level and was able to view corresponding entries.

“Nothing special today too.”

He was looking for any mentions of unique items! And even though Lee Hyun had just 'C' access level, sometimes he was stumbling upon some interesting bits of information. Usually those were contributed by other players with the same access level, they were telling about their adventures, secret quests and rewards for them. Such messages were quickly becoming popular and getting moved to sections he couldn't access to.

Lee Hyun was trying to catch them before that happened.

About 3-4 such messages a day appeared on the website. And if you carefully watch it, you can read them before they are moved.

However today he just wasted time again.

‘Whatever. Anyway, i’m almost out of points.’

From the account used by Lee Hyun every day a few of points were deducted. It happened every time he was reading a message. That way Dark Gamers Union was forcing members to post useful messages to earn points, used to view other information.

Hyun got up from the chair and went down to the hall. There he has put on a light jacket, took a basket and went out of house.

Every morning after exercises and browsing news on the internet he was going to the market to get some cheap food.

“Good morning.”

“Oh, young man, you’re early today. I’ve got some fresh cutlass fish today. I’ll sell it to you cheap.”

“Thanks.”

Hyun was coming to the market every day so it was natural that all the salesmen knew him very well.

‘Picky bastard!’

‘Damn that greedy guy!’

Even when buying a single fish, Hyun was very demanding. He was always asking where it was caught, checking how fresh it is, examining eyes and mouth. He was noticing every little thing, even the way the hook was removed.

Salesmen on the market were used to customers with no knowledge of fish’s freshness. However Lee Hyun was well aware of those matters and never hesitated to haggle. He knew all the prices very well and trying to sell him something for more than its price was the gravest possible mistake!

Also Hyun was never searching for cheap food. Every morning he was cooking for his little sister so he was buying only the best of the best.

That kind of ‘infamy’ [reputation?] allowed him to buy best food at reasonable prices without having to bargain.

Using the best ingredients he brought from market he made cutlass fish stew with soy sauce for his sister.

“Thanks, brother. Everything was very tasty as always. I’m off to school!”

“Okay, have a safe trip.”

Once his sister left to school it was time Hyun devoted to himself.

Lee Hayan was eagerly preparing for 'Korea' university entrance exams and was gathering all available information. She was surprised to learn from university website, that there were many ways to get accepted to it. But one particularly attracted her attention, the one for professional gamers.

Video games have become an important part of our life and culture, the amount of people, playing games regularly constantly increases.

After virtual reality came to our lives and the revolutionary Royal Road appeared our university opened a faculty, devoted to video games. There we study entire history of video game industry, from the very beginning to virtual reality.

Conditions to apply:

Records on awards, related to videogames.

School diploma.

After provided information is checked, you will be interviewed by one of the future professors, that will check the applicant's knowledge and make the final decision.

Virtual reality was giving people chance to live their dream.

There were no people with disabilities and everyone was able to enjoy their adventures to the fullest.

After the release of Royal Road the number of travel agencies and consequently number of corresponding faculties of tourism and transportation decreased. But in their place faculties associated with videogames appeared.

Lee Hayan knew what exactly helped their family out of poverty. Money for selling her brother's game character.

“Hyun doesn't have any awards, but he has records about the sale of his character, maybe that will do?”

Though the sale records weren't some kind of gaming award, they still signified an achievement and could serve as a good argument.

Especially since Hyun had great understanding of the subject. During his year of getting ready for Royal Road Hyun studied all the available works on virtual reality.

He probably knew more about virtual reality than any student of gaming faculty.

“It might work.”

Lee Hayan used her savings to buy official application papers and filled them herself on behalf of Lee Hyun!

*

Plains of Despair.

On the custom map, made by players a vast blank patch was located to the east of Rosenheim Kingdom and British Confederacy.

There wasn't much trustworthy information about this region. The few brave souls who dared to go deep into this territory were dying in a couple days under constant attacks from monsters!

On the maps sold at merchant stores only one thing was said about it: 'If you're looking for true despair, these lands are for you.'

A very precise and complete description for such a dangerous place.

Weed and following him NPC appeared in a spacious cave, hidden inside one of the hills. The entrance was cleverly disguised by a large stone so that it was impossible to find it without knowing the precise location.

“Awwwwooooooooo!”

The moment Weed appeared he was greeted by horrifying wolf howl.

‘Scarry...’

After arriving at the unknown territory it is always important to be cautious. Even NPC knew it. But Buren and Becker seemed to ignore that simple rule.

“If the Chief is with us we don’t have to worry about anything!”

“We trust you, Chief!”

“Let’s go see how you all those monsters down with one swing of the sword!”

“...”

Weed sighed and gave soldiers an order:

“Stay here. Make arrangements for food, rest and guard. Wait for my return.”

“Yes! We understand.”

Luckily for Weed the area around the portal was safe. Having all the initial steps planned in advance, he bought a month's worth of provisions for his small army.

Weed watched his people set a camp for a bit and then slowly left the hideout to scout the surroundings.

There was strong piercing wind outside.

After nearly tumbling down a few times Weed climbed to the top of the hill to get a good view.

All around were wide grasslands, swaying in the wind.

Plains of Despair was such an unfitting name for this entrancing landscape of rolling green waves.

“Beautiful...”

The grasses were moving in unison as if performing some glorious dance.

Weed took a look around.

To the east of the hill was a mountain range. Not so high or steep, but very long.

“I believe they were called Yuroki mountains on the map?”

The map of Bersa continent by an unknown author. According to it Plains of Despair had only one mountain range - Yuroki mountains.

The place, inhabited by numerous giant monsters!

On top of the mountain range Weed noticed a high stone wall and a fort. And at the center of the fort a strange black temple was visible.

‘This is it...’

It was hard to say for sure at such a great distance, but it seemed that there was a Beelzebub statue there. That must have been the temple of dark god, erected by necromancers of Bar Khan Demoff.

“Chwi-i-ik!”

A weird sound suddenly came from somewhere. Weed immediately fell to the ground and tried to be as unnoticeable as possible.

In the distance an ork dressed in steel armor with a glaive in his hands appeared. Weed’s mood improved after seeing him.

“Well, at least something. Maybe i’ll be able to raise the level of

my soldiers by hunting orcs before storming the temple of the dark god. Some work and the mission will be finished in no time.”

His chest started filling with hope and confidence.

“I will never retreat. Will fear no opponent. Even orcs are welcome.”

About the time Weed reached level 200 he caught a stranded treasure-hungry orc. He was looking like a man, a big, green, ugly man with fangs.

“Nice meeting you, old friend.” - sung Weed and slowly headed towards his target.

The wave of confidence was pushing him to quickly kill his first monster in this land to mark the start of the big hunt and eventual assault on the dark temple!

Rustle!

The trees and bushes at the foot of the mountains started shaking.

Weed, who was about to attack, froze in place.

The Yuroki mountains were moving!

A huge army of orcs was moving between the trees!

Before his eyes a horde of more than 3 thousands orcs was marching.

And he didn't even know if it was an entire army. And maybe he would never know.

[t/n: this piece looks tricky in korean, 2 long 23-character sentences different in just 1 character.]

“ ... ”

Weed sheathed the sword and held his breath.

‘At least vampires didn't have such great numbers. There's just way too many orcs.’

Moreover, the orc horde was just scaring away other, even more fearsome monsters.

In the end Weed had to hug the ground and wait for orcs to pass. Only when the rumbling of the horde disappeared into the distance he dared to lift his head.

As he already had inspected Yuroki mountains, this time Weed looked to the west. There was a great view at the surrounding area from the hill and he managed to see something interesting. A wall.

And some frontier human settlement behind it!

Weed made sure there were no monsters around and headed towards the settlement.

You were first to discover the Village of Exiles.

Rewards:

Fame increased by 300.

For a week the rewards and experience for the village's quests are doubled.

When Weed approached the gates an almost forgotten message appeared before him. That was the first time since the Dwarf's Grave at Baruk mountain range.

'That means I'm first.'

No player yet managed to come so far into the Plains of Despair. There were many players who were disregarding their lives to explore new territories, but Plains of Despair were just too vast, so this part remained undiscovered.

Exiles from all over the Bersa continent lived here. Almost all of them were big tough guys with numerous scars all over their bodies.

If Weed didn't know their origin beforehand he'd have guessed that they were barbarians.

Behind villages walls to his surprise he found around 300 hastily-built wooden houses.

“There's an outsider.”

“See him for the first time.”

All the villagers were avoiding unfamiliar stranger. But that didn't stop Weed in the least.

“Hello everyone.”

“It seems you know nothing about our village, stranger. We live in a very dangerous place, we can't waste time on idle talks, especially with outsiders like you.”

“Nice to meet you.”

“I don't trust outsiders.”

Weed tried to start a conversation again and again, but villagers were just leaving while ignoring him or even showing hostility.

“We didn't forget who banished our ancestors. What did you

come here for?”

No one in the village accepted him.

‘Probably this village is completely separated from the rest of the continent and my fame means nothing for them.’

However Weed wouldn’t be himself if he gave up easily.

He decided to take his usual approach: he’s set a campfire in the middle of the village and started to roast a boar that he prepared in advance.

“Come check the meat out, it’s so good you won’t be able to stop. It’s completely free, so eat as much as you want! Also I can carve a beautiful sculpture of any animal for you.”

Weed was aiming at one of the basic instincts - hunger! Who could ignore such delicious food, especially since it was free?

But villagers were still ignoring his efforts and some even got angry.

“Are you making fun of us?”

“We can cook ourselves.”

“Even after starving for ten days a warrior won’t lose his pride. It seems outsiders don’t understand such simple thing.”

“Ahahaha, sculptures... Who even needs them?”

All the inhabitants of Village of Exiles were great warriors.

Despite all Weed’s efforts none of them approached him. The few of them who stopped nearby were just watching from a distance, talking and laughing at him.

And Weed was continuing to roast the boar despite the mockery and threatening looks.

Never before cooking and sculpture mastery failed him. Everyone who as much as tasted his food were absolutely in love with it. And sculptures often brought good results too.

Once he carved a beautiful bouquet for a player named Volk, who was going to propose to a girl he loved. Sculpture mastery was always bringing unexpected benefits.

‘They must have no sense of art... Savages.’

Villagers’ attitude did not upset Weed at all.

‘It’s not the first time I’m being ignored. I’m used to it...’

He remembered well the time he was working at a factory when he was a child.

When Hyun was 14 years old he was already working full-time undoing the seams in a stuffy and dusty room. That was hard and monotonous work and he was only allowed to leave on lunch breaks. Hyun was terribly jealous of cheerful students passing by him when he was on lunch breaks.

At the time he was an outsider for everyone. However that didn't break him but instead strengthened and made him grow up in spite of everything.

Weed finished roasting the boar, and after having receiving no response, he packed everything back into his bag and continued walking through the village trying to start a conversation. He believed that among all the NPCs there must be at least one who will talk to him.

And he wasn't wrong. One young guy, who was crouching on the ground and staring at a shield lying besides him, turned to Weed and said:

“Oh, stranger! If you managed to get here you must be worth something.”

“Got where?”

“Hah, you don't even know where you are?”

“Thanks to the map I have a general idea of my location, but I know nothing about this place.” - honestly replied Weed.

“Well, we don’t know anything about you either. This village appeared here in the Times of Chaos. Heard anything about that?”

“Yeah, but not much.”

“Those were times when everyone went mad and ran rampant. Our ancestors came to these lands and fought for their lives. To be honest they were willing to fight, but they had no weapons. They were driven here without as much as a hilt of a sword...”

Visions of the past started to appear before Weed’s eyes.

Numerous soldiers with spears and swords were chasing poor starving people away into far lands. Lands, filled with multiple dangerous monsters. There were hundreds of thousands of people. The ground was soaked with blood, mourning and grief.

“At first the number of people, banished here, quickly reduced. Only the most tenacious survived. Ahem! I would tell you more, but I’m busy at the moment.”

“Busy? With what?”

“You might have noticed this shield here. Unfortunately it’s

broken and I need a replacement as soon as possible. Could you by chance do me a favour?"

"Yes, I'll help any way I can."

"Great. You should bring this shield to a certain man and take a new one from him. He's running a large blacksmith in this village."

Ding!

New Quest: Shield for Kokun.

Despite all efforts, hunter Kokun failed to fix his shield. If it breaks during the fight he will be in trouble. You have to bring it to his friend Lucille to exchange for a new one.

Difficulty: E.

Restrictions: If you leave the village with the shield Kokun will get angry.

"I'll bring you a new shield."

You accepted the quest.

Weed believed that before doing a quest it was important to

gather all available information. The shield he got was very heavy and solid.

“Now, shall we? Identification!”

Shield was all cracked and dirty, so it was hard to estimate its value from look alone. Weed was heading to the blacksmith, looking through the shield's information window in the meanwhile.

Lucille's Shield

Durability: 12/50.

Defence: 16.

Simple shield made of low-grade metals. It is covered by steel on the outside but very frigid on the inside. It is weak against blunt weapons. It should be replaced at first opportunity.

Requirements: None.

Effects: 50% chance to defend against projectiles.

The village wasn't very big so it wasn't too hard to find the blacksmith. However it didn't look anything like Kokun described. A small furnace with an anvil in a small room with a couple swords and a few other weapons hung on the walls was all Weed saw. The

only big thing there was the bearded and muscular smith Lucille.

“I see you for the first time, stranger.”

“I came here at Kokun’s request.”

Weed’s relationships with villagers weren’t quite on the good side, so he decided to take the initiative. However all his worries were unnecessary.

“Oh, come on in. There’s a familiar smell of metal around you. I love fire, that’s why I became a smith. Why did you master this craft?”

Weed quickly considered his answer. Sometimes such insignificant at first glance questions were determining your relationships with NPCs.

“I like melting cold metal and giving it a new shape.”

“Good answer. So, what brought you here?”

Weed handed the shield.

“He asks for a new one.”

“That’s it! That idiot Kokun broke his shield again. I warned him

many times to be careful... Ahem! I can't keep doing this for free. I'll give another one for 5 gold. That useless Kokun doesn't have that kind of money, so you'll have to pay instead."

"Erm..."

Weed was about to say something rude, as he felt scammed, but held himself at the last moment. It was foolish to give up on the first quest after such a long search. He convinced himself, that this is just more investments in the future.

'Hmm, I haven't been cheated like that since meeting that sage Rodrigues.'

Weed passed the gold to the smiling Lucille.

"Thanks. I just happen to have a spare shield for him. Here you go."

Weed got the shield. The quest was complete and he was about to leave but Lucille stopped him.

"Hey, have you heard about the origins of our village?"

Weed was first to discover this settlement. Maybe that, or the fact of Weed being a smith himself, was what made Lucille to tell him this story.

“Kokun told me a bit. He stopped at the part where only a small part of exiled remained.”

“Great. Then I’ll continue. Survivors were wandering the land of monsters in search for a place to settle. Their first choice was a huge cave, but not everyone liked the idea of living in a constant darkness. Gradually more and more people were coming outside, and eventually they decided to found a village.”

“Incredible, they had the courage to start a settlement in the Plains of Despair!”

Weed wanted to show his admiration for their courage. Even in such dangerous environment the pioneering spirit of humans won!

“Nah, that wasn’t that remarkable. To tell the truth, at that moment there were still a lot of survivors. But they had a disagreement. They’ve split in 2 camps: ones, who didn’t want to change anything and anes who wanted to leave the cave. The latter were the ones who founded our village and later built the wall around it. Unfortunately 99 of every hundred died in the process.”

“ ... ”

That was a story for a horror movie. Unknown lands, full of dangers and a group of defenceless people...

“Yeah, that’s how it all happened. Through trial and error, each of them costed human lives, the survivors acquired new

knowledge. They learned which places to avoid, discovered habits of monsters and predators of this land. They started to better understand the world around them. Around that time life in the village started to become safe. Ahem, I guess I talked to much. I still have a lot of work to do. Here, this is my present for you.”

You acquired the map of the plains.

This is the map of the Plains of Despair.

It displays the location of castles, villages, monster dens and cursed places.

Lucille suddenly gave Weed a very valuable item. The map of Plains of Despair and everything in them! With a roughly marked landscape and main habitats of some monster kinds.

Though it was drawn really bad, like it was done by a child who was learning to write.

“Thank you very much.”

“You’re welcome. Try to visit the village more often. The people who don’t hunt are more welcome towards strangers. It would be nice if more new people were coming here.”

Weed headed back to Kokun to deliver the shield. The hunter was waiting for him at the same place while sharpening his sword.

“Oh, you came back? You’re late. Did you bring it?”

Weed gave him the shield.

“Thanks. You did a favour to me, but I don’t have anything to give you. Though wait a second, here, take it.”

The quest “Shield for Kokun” is complete.

The hunter Kokun have already lost his shield a few times in a battle. He was always coming back from the hunt injured, but never yet he brought back anything worthy. Villagers consider him a failure.

No one know where he fights.

Reward: 20 steel arrows for the long bow. A little experience.

Weed opened the character window. The experience bar only grew by 0.001%.

You can’t expect much from a E rank difficulty quest, even with double experience bonus. If only it was one of the quests where experience depended on the completed goals...

Satisfied Kokun examined his new shield and said:

“Oh, yeah, I started telling about our village, right? Remind me where did we stop?”

“The small part of survivors founded the village. Lucille told me up to this part.”

“Hah! He sure loves to talk. Ill continue. To survive we had to become stronger. All the villagers mastered weapons, especially bows: some of us are even better at it than dark elves. What else... Our village is eastmost in the Plains of Despair. The Yuroki mountain range can be clearly seen from here, it's inhabited by numerous orcs.”

“You founded your village in a dangerous place.”

“Yeah. Most of the villages are like that. We're even relatively lucky. There's an iron mine nearby, so we can forge weapons. we have plenty of food too. Though from time to time we're getting raided by orcs.”

“Orcs?”

“Every year at harvest time they come to plunder our barns. To be honest orcs are the only reason we don't live in abundance. But sadly they are also the reason we don't have to deal with other, more dangerous monsters. So we live in poverty, but relatively safe.”

The exile settlement was holding despite annual orc raids.

“However a few years ago orcs started taking not just food, but villagers. After all they can’t make anything themselves!”

“I heard that orcs are the worst race with regard to crafting.”

“That’s right. That’s why they take people away, so that they make weapons and do other work for them. In the last few years they took more than a hundred people! Damn orcs!”

“Have you tried to stop them?”

Kokun burst into laughing.

“Ha! To stop the horde?! I never heard anything dumber. Orcs love fighting, they’re unrivaled at it. They fight not only humans, but elves and giant monsters and even each other!”

“I see.”

“I tell you all this because you didn’t yet understand what a dangerous place you got into. Even our best warriors have a hard time hunting some monsters, giant ant for example. We hold a celebration if they bring one from the hunt. Do you think you can hunt 5 of them? If you manage this villagers will change their attitude towards you.”

Ding!

New quest: Kukun's doubt.

Hunter Kokun had met a lot of people who talked big but did little. To oppose the orcs one needs not just courage but sharp mind.

Catch 5 giant ants to prove your courage.

Difficulty: C.

Reward: recognition of the villagers.

Penalty for failure: hunter Kokun won't talk to you any more.

A new quest!

Kokun narrowed his eyes and continued:

“Let it be a test for you. I won't be surprised if you refuse. Consider this a challenge for outsiders.”

Weed went quiet for a moment and then answered firmly:

“I'll catch those giant ants.”

You accepted the quest.

“I sure hope so. You can find giant ants in the plains to the west. They’re easy to find. Though i’m not sure if you can run away if something goes wrong.”

Weed left the village and headed back to the hill where his men were hiding. 10 Royal knights, Buren, Becker, Hosram, Dale, 400 soldiers and 50 priests. A small army led by Weed!

“Keep waiting.”

“As you say, Chief!”

Weed stood in front of the stone at the entrance to the cave and took out his sculpting tools. He already got a hang of carving sculptures, Zahab’s knife and a chisel were moving in his hands at an incredible speed!

He carved the familiar face that sometimes even appeared in his dreams! The face of Seoyoon served as a model for yet another sculpture.

‘I hope it ends up as another fine piece...’

Weed had big expectations. He had never yet failed at carving Seoyoon's face...

In his sculptures he tried many times to use faces of other girls, but never succeeded with it.

Because of the minor details it was hard to recreate person's face. Sometimes when looking at a beautiful face you understand that something is missing. It seems that if you make nose a bit higher or eyes bigger you'll achieve perfection.

Especially that was the case with women faces.

But in fact if start changing something you get unexpected results. By doing minor changes you change overall balance. That's why the 'fixed' result usually ends up inferior to the original.

For every failed work sculptor's fame was decreasing. Weed wished to avoid that, so he was only carving Seoyoon's face. Her appearance was so flawless, that just by changing the expression a little he could change the overall atmosphere.

This time Weed decided to carve Seoyoon as a fearsome warrior.

For the clothes and armor he used the equipment of northern mercenaries, he heard that there are many female mercenaries among them.

The fierce and confident Seoyoon with a sword in front of her

looked like she was guarding the entrance from dangerous monsters. That was a perfect image of a worthy and proud mercenary.

Ding!

Fine piece! You finished the statue of female mercenary!

The northern lands are poor and unfit for farming, so a lot of northern women become mercenaries to protect their homes and earn some money. They never retreat and always finish their assigned tasks.

With weapons in their hands they fearlessly slay the most dangerous monsters of the north! Ever since knights became too arrogant the peacekeeping duty fell on mercenaries' shoulders.

Artistic value: 600.

Effects:

Health and mana regeneration increased by 15% for a day.

Movement speed increased by 15%.

Charisma increased by 100.

Strength increased by 10.

Agility increased by 10.

All attributes increased by 5.

For a week after seeing the statue you can take a mission at the mercenary guild on better terms.

Experience gain increased by 5%.

These effects do not stack with effects of other sculptures.

The number of created fine pieces: 5.

Sculpture mastery experience points gained.

Fame increased by 85.

Endurance increased by 1.

New attribute: Charisma!

Charisma:

this attribute represents the ability to attract people. Primarily those of opposing sex. You become more attractive and charming. One of the main attributes for bards, dancers and party leaders. If your profession is related to crafting, charisma will help you to create more detailed works.

Due to your profession, your charisma attribute is raised by 20.

Fortitude raised by 5.

Seoyoon's image didn't fail him this time either.

‘Hmm, this sculpture doesn’t affect combat performance much, but it increases experience gain, which is not bad as well.’

And he also got a new attribute that influenced Weed’s sculpture skill, an unexpected but pleasant gift.

“Hmmm...”

Weed tried to examine the reflection of his face in the knife’s blade to see if it changed after the new attribute appeared.

Then he took his best-looking pose and addressed his soldiers.

“Gather everyone. We’re moving out!”

Weed and his army headed out into plains to hunt giant ants.

“Priests, prepare for battle, bless the warriors.”

“Yes. Freya, please give your faithful servants power to fight against evil, Bless!”

Priests used group blessing. Order of Freya have sent their best priests with Weed so blessing 400 soldiers at once wasn’t a problem for them.

But Weed still decided to act careful. He believed that if he was to throw simple soldiers into the fight from the start there'd be no way to avoid losses, despite the support of Freya's priests.

“Knights move ahead with me, the rest of you follow us at a certain distance.”

The Royal Knights were grumbling but still following Weed's orders.

“We will obey for now.”

“Until we finish our mission we have to listen to you. But don't get the idea that we do it out of respect.”

Weed was ignored in the village! Now he was ignored here as well!

Weed sighed to himself and without a word let the knights ahead to search for the ants.

When he was listening to Kokun he didn't take him seriously. Well, the ants were big, they were hard to catch, so what? However after seeing those monsters he couldn't hold his surprise:

“Woah, they're really huge!”

Though ordinary ants were 1 cm long, the monsters that were

running around the plains in front of them were easily over a few meters long. And they were moving extremely fast!

“Don’t get bothered by their size, go! Attack!”

Accompanied by knights, Weed rushed towards monsters. But they were moving just too fast. In one step they were passing a few meters and were often making sharp turns.

Knights had to be extremely careful to avoid a frontal attack of moving at top speed ants.

Weed couldn’t help but feel frustrated.

‘I spent so many reputation points on them, and this all I got...’

Knights weren’t able to kill even a single ant! The brave warriors were just running in circles trying to dodge rushing monsters.

“We need to slow down the ants! Priests, use slows!”

“Will be done, oh devoted one.”

Thankfully, Weed’s faith helped him to command the priests. They were executing his orders quickly and accurately.

50 priests simultaneously recited prayers:

“The beauty of Freya stops everyone in their steps. So be it! By the power of our faith, Slow!”

Bizarre anti-blessing of priests started to work. The movements of giant ants started to slow down more and more. The prayers of 50 priests added up and the resulting spell was a lot more powerful than the prayer of a single priest.

After a few seconds ants froze in place.

“Knights, attack! Archers, start shooting! The rest, guard the priests.”

“Yes!”

A hundred of soldiers pulled their bows and released a swarm of arrows at the frozen monsters. Ants were so big, that it was very easy to aim at them.

The remaining 300 soldiers were guarding the priests. And Weed rushed to attack the ants.

They had to hurry, as priests had to constantly spend mana to keep the slow spell up.

‘We can’t let this drag for too long.’

Archers' attacks were gradually reducing monsters' health.

‘They’re so big that arrows are like mosquito bites for them...’

Along with Weed the knights rushed to attack the ants. They were climbing on top of them and breaking open their shells with swords. Some were cutting off their legs.

Weed followed others' example and climbed on the ant's head. That was dangerous but danger didn't stop him. He was hacking the monsters along with the knights.

Giant ants were holding for a long time.

Sometimes they were managing to weaken the slowing spells of the priests and shake the knights off them. Every time that happened Weed's heart was skipping a beat. Fortunately Knights weren't dying so easy, so after the fall they were getting back up, receiving some healing from priests and going back into fight.

In such manner an hour since the start of the fight Weed's little army finished the last giant ant.

You have Level up.

You receive giant and chitin shell.

You receive giant ant antennae. You can use them to find the

cave where the queen of giant ants is hidden.

“Excellent.”

Only after defeating the ants Weed realized that their level was over 350.

“They’re ridiculously strong.”

It took quite a lot of skill to fight such strong monsters. It was fortunate that because of his high fame and previously completed tasks his level was quite high.

After gathering all the loot and leading his army back to their hideout Weed headed back to the village of exiles.

There he showed the ant shells to Kokun.

“I didn’t expect much. Thought you were just another braggart. But I was wrong, you really defeated the giant ants.”

Kokun carefully examined the ant shells brought by Weed.

“Amazing. By dealing with them you proved that you’re really an outstanding warrior. No one will doubt you any more.”

Ding!

You have completed a quest: 'Kokun's doubt'.

In the whole village of exiles only a few people ever managed to hunt 5 giant ants. And those people are called the greatest warriors and the main protectors of the village. Now Kokun will spread the news of another great warrior among the villagers.

Reward:

Kokun's knife.

Experience points.

Fame increased by 6.

This time too Weed checked the experience bar. For this quest he was awarded 15% of experience bar. But the most important was the fact that the villagers will finally start to accept him.

"This is my knife. Now it belongs to you. Such a great warrior like you is always a welcome friend for me."

Kokun took out a small knife and passed it to Weed.

"..."

That was the most dirty and dull blade Weed ever saw in the game.

“And what do I need it for?”

“It’s handy for removing bark from trees. Very useful knife.”

Weed decided not to reply, he already had Zahab’s knife and Kokun’s gift was of no use to him.

“I’ll continue my story about our village. The place where it’s located is really very dangerous. If you act rashly you can easily lose your life. That’s why you should never underestimate orcs. Since early childhood they’re trained to fight monsters, very strong monsters... It can be said that orcs rule these lands.”

“Got it. Avoid the orcs.”

“That’s right, if you value your life at least. However high in the Yuroki mountains live dark elves, Moreover recently some dark creatures that use magic appeared and allied themselves with elves.”

Weed’s gaze became keener.

“Could you tell me more about that?”

“Village’s hunters, like me, aren’t that aware of what happens in the Yuroki mountains. But we saw many times how orcs fight with dark elves. Almost every time orcs were winning, even though

elves use dark magic and summoned spirits. But ever since those dark creatures appeared, orcs started to lose more fights. A lot more fights. Moreover, the slain orcs were rising and attacking their own kind. I almost got killed a few times when I watched such battles.”

Weed was well aware what kind of dark creatures were allied with dark elves. The necromancers of bar Khan Demoff.

“Dark elves started to win. They even built walls, fort and then a fortress and towers in the mountains. Thought that seems strange, isn’t it?”

“Right.”

Elves were the race who lived in harmony with world and nature.

And even though dark elves loved to fight, they still lived in natural environment. Why would they move into a fortress?

“I have a feeling that elves are preparing for a war. Are they going to start the full scale war with orcs and are hiding something behind those walls? I don’t know anything, I can only guess. However one thing I can tell for sure: ever since elves got support nights in our lands became longer.”

“Longer?”

“At certain time dark clouds emerge from elven fortress, and

they cover the entire sky. The time for which we can see the sun keeps reducing. Take a look in the evening and you'll see for yourself."

That's how Weed learned the rough situation in the Plains of Despair.

"By the way, if you meet brother and sister Moss and Amy in the village, don't talk to them about the shape shifting monsters. Now I need to go hunting."

Kokun picked up his shield, waved his head and left the village.

Chapter 6: Sculpture Transformation

Weed was slowly walking through the village.

After he successfully completed the quest, villagers stopped ignoring him.

“We respect strong fighters. You need a lot of power to protect friends and family.”

“They say you killed 5 Giant Ants? Incredible! I have something to be done, will you help me when you’re free?”

Weed was getting small requests from villagers and at the same time getting to know more about the situation in the village. For example, the Village of Exiles didn’t have any stores, and the villagers were buying things from each other.

‘Hmmm, I won’t be able to do much trading around here.’

While exploring the village, Weed noticed a crying boy. For some reason, he immediately thought that it was Moss, mentioned by Cocoon. Especially since there weren’t that many kids in the village.

“What happened?”

Weed approached him and asked the boy, but he shook his head.

“You’re a stranger. Strangers don’t need to know that.”

“ ... ”

That was a very cold reception. However, Weed was persistent. When you’re denied something, it only makes you want it more!

“A lot of monsters live around this village. I heard there are even shape-shifting monsters, maybe you got hurt by one of them?”

After hearing about the monsters, the boy immediately raised his head. Tears on his face went dry, and his eyes shone with hatred.

“Have you ever hunted shape-shifting monsters before?”

“Of course. I hunted many monsters.”

“Then help us. Those monsters... those damn monsters are after my sister.”

Weed felt that there was definitely a quest associated with this conversation.

“Tell me more about what happened.”

“Actually...”

The boy vividly told about his problem.

The monsters that were attacking the village saw his sister Amy. The Doppelganger that led them fell in love with her at first sight.

“I like you human! I will feed you as much as you want if you come with me!”

The leader of the Doppelgangers was inviting Amy to his lair but she was persistent in her rejection. She didn't want to leave her older brother Moss.

Then Doppelganger turned into her brother Moss, copying his face and body, becoming his perfect copy.

“Will this do? Will you come with me now?”

“To live with a monster, whose original form is long since forgotten? I'd rather bite off my tongue and die!”

Amy threatened to end her life and Doppelganger reluctantly retreated.

He liked her a lot. And in the Plains of Despair, monsters usually got what they wanted.

“Fine, human. I can wait. I'll give you 3 years, after that I will take you with me! And if you refuse then, I'll slay every person in this village.”

The time given by the Doppelganger was running out in 3 months.

Moss was pleading with tears in his eyes.

“Please don't let them take my sister. I don't have anything to give you, but please help me. Those Doppelgangers live in the woods to the north.”

Ttiring!

Doppelganger covets a village beauty.

Monsters think of humans as things.

The leader of Doppelgangers likes the girl Amy.

Kill him so she doesn't get taken away!

Difficulty: C.

Reward: Unknown.

Conditions: Moss and Amy must survive.

‘That means I’ll fight shape-shifting Doppelgangers soon.’

Usually Weed would just refuse this quest. The reward was unknown and Doppelgangers were very unpleasant opponents. They use magic and often can do something completely unexpected.

However, the boy’s tears reminded Weed of his past.

When his parents died, he was left only with his grandmother and his younger sister. It seemed like the world had ended back then. He had no one to rely on. He wanted some support but there was no one to provide it.

That’s why he understood Moss’s feeling very well. If he had someone to ask for help back then only to get rejected his life would be ruined completely.

Weed nodded and replied:

“I’ll protect Amy for sure.”

You accepted the quest.

“Thank you, stranger!”

Moss smiled for the first time since they met.

*

Weed left the village and headed towards the hideout.

From their peaceful kingdom, brave warriors of Rosenheim got right into the middle of Plains of Despair.

And in their first battle, they had to fight Giant Ants! To survive they had to give it their all. They won in that battle, kept their lives and as a reward all of them got 2-3 levels.

Soldiers' faith in Weed was absolute.

“Commander! Where are we going now?”

“The innocent people of nearby village are being harassed by a Doppelganger, it threatens them and wants to take a beautiful girl Amy from her older brother Moss.”

“We must stop them.” - replied Hosram in a firm voice.

The Royal Knights were touched by the story too.

“It is knight's duty to protect weak, we will follow you.”

“I can’t tolerate that a young girl is suffering from an evil monster.”

“Please take us with you, we will definitely stop Doppelganger.”

The small army headed to the northern woods, where the Doppelganger lived. Sunlight couldn’t penetrate the thick canopy of trees to dispel the darkness below. Many dangerous monsters inhabited these woods and sometime ghastly sounds could be heard.

“The earth is tainted.”

“This forest is cursed.”

The priests’ warnings didn’t stop Weed.

“Summon Death Knight!”

Death Knight Van Hawk remained in front of the troops.

“Oh, a familiar place.”

The Death Knight walked valiantly.

And shortly after they discovered the Doppelganger. They could tell it was the Doppelganger because it had the same appearance as

the boy Moss. Weed and the soldiers eagerly attacked the Doppelganger.

During the fight, the Doppelganger changed his form a few times. By alternating the skills used against the soldiers, Royal Knights and Van Hawk, it endured. The variety of skills it used was enough to cause confusion, but thanks to the combination of Weed and the Death Knight along with the Priests' healing, the soldiers were able to win.

Weed and the soldiers eagerly took on quests.

All kinds of monsters emerged around the Village of Exiles. Giant Ants, Doppelgangers and so on, usually discovering the monsters at the start was the hardest part. The missions asked of them involved killing bizarre plants, animals and flame monsters within caves.

“Commander, we’ll serve under you!”

“Commander, we’ll follow you anywhere!”

Weed seduced the soldiers! In fact, the power of the soldiers did not help much early on. The reason being they were too weak. However, while hunting strong monsters one by one, they were getting stronger at a very fast pace. The mastery of the Royal Knights rose and the pincer movement with the Priests was done smoothly.

The army's morale changed dramatically. At first, the soldiers didn't trust in Weed much and weren't providing much help as they were weak. But time was passing and the more they hunted the stronger they became. Weed in the central role was sweating due to the light. Hunting the large monsters around and sweeping through the quests was Weed!

There were plenty of perilous moments, but Weed successfully resolved the quest and went on. And then the experience climbed at a very fast rate. When hunting just one of the monsters, a certain amount of experience and items will drop. But when you receive a hunting quest, in addition to when you catch the monsters, the quest experience rewards were very savory. The experience they received was practically 3 times as much as they would receive in Rosenheim Kingdom.

‘I guess because it's somewhat dangerous.’

However, the drawback to the quests was the poor quality of things received.

In areas with poorly developed technology, all the produced items were of poor quality. That's why when Weed was receiving weapons as reward he was giving it to Royal Knights or soldiers.

“Thanks Commander.”

“I'll be sure to use it well.”

Every time Weed gave away some item, he was crying inside. It was very hard to take the item you gave to NPC back without your intimacy declining sharply.

‘Inevitable but...’

After hunting in the Plains of Despair he reached level 279. Even the soldiers rose their levels significantly, the Royal Knights and Priests were also quite strong. However, with the Orcs and Dark Elves as the opponent, they were woefully lacking.

*

Orcs!

The word Orc immediately brought a few images to mind. Greedy and tenacious race. With strong obsession they were vengeful opponents. Quickly multiplying like cockroaches and good at fighting. The Orcs were at least in the thousands, maybe even the tens of thousands!

“Urgh!”

Back in the cave Weed groaned helplessly. The hunt around the village was going well, but how was he supposed to defeat armies of Orcs, Dark Elves and Necromancers?

His subordinates were at best 4 Centurions, 400 soldiers and 10 Royal Knights. Of course he had 50 Priests, but their power was

only helpful when supporting the fighting troops to some extent.

After a number of runs, the usefulness of the Royal Knight could be considered similar to Freya's Paladins to some extent. Going right up the Yuroki Mountains with just this amount of power, they are bound to surely die. They will die at the hands of the Orcs before even meeting the Necromancers.

Enemies on all sides.

Orcs and Necromancers were definitely enemies!

But the Dark Elves were allied with the Necromancers.

Weed was thinking hard. Usually he was very sharp and knew well when to flatter or keep silent to earn more money, but now he was struggling to find any solution to this situation.

'The enemies are strong but they're not exactly close to each other.'

Finally in Weed's head from a fiction book he read at some unknown time in childhood a sentence emerged.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend!

The moment he recalled that sentence, it seemed like the fog in his mind started to clear. Like a bright ray of light appeared in the

darkness of hopelessness.

Weed wasn't that much into complicated novels. The more complex the book was the harder his head ached after reading it. Therefore he liked simple, clear, cheerful stories, which he mainly read. Fantasy, adventures and comics!

‘Books never lie.’

The next idea that came to his head he encountered in comics a few times. And if he combines it with his sculpture mastery it could lead to something interesting.

‘Won't hurt to just try.’

Weed left the cave and started looking for a big stone. There were a lot of stones around but he needed one of a certain size.

‘Not this one, I need one higher than me.’

Finally he found a stone about 3 meters high.

Zahab's Carving Knife moved quickly cutting through the rock.

Gradually an odd shape started to appear from the stone. It was neither Seoyoon, who was the usual motive of Weed's works, nor some object. It was a creature alive and moving. Warlike and greedy species.

Orc!

However, while working on the sculpture, Weed became plunged in distress.

‘Orcs are greedy. But I mean, I don’t understand the greed. Greedy for what? Peaceful and beautiful world, I have no idea on the activities and excessive obsession of selfish and greedy creatures.’

For a perfect sculpture, it is very important to understand the target. Weed did not know how the heck to understand Orcs.

It was surely not going to be easy to understand Orcs more than humans. The created statue was made in the form of a modest Orc. It was roughly the shape of an exemplary Orc. While sculpting various monsters, he had never sculpted an Orc, so as much as possible he faithfully resurrected the memories of time.

Unassuming and ordinary statue. Somewhat docile and awkward Orc was being created. Then one moment that happened some time ago suddenly emerged. The big incident where a whopping 5 gold had been blown to obtain a shield for Cocoon. Back then there was no other way, but still.

At that time he was expecting to receive a reward for the quest. But when he actually completed the quest, all he gained was from Cocoon was a story, a few words and a knife. He entered 5 gold and failed to even get 1 copper back. He seemed to fall over in regret.

Money! Money! Money! Money! Money!

Obsession over 5 lost gold! Greed! Obsession! Desire! Grudge!

"Euaaaa!"

Weed moved the carving knife brilliantly. The statue became filled with life. Selfish wrinkles under the eyes, gaping mouth ready to devour and a pig nose filled with desire.

‘Preferably a little stronger, show significant muscle, add scar marks to make him more life-like!’

‘I think I’ll make his muscles bigger so he looks tougher and add scar marks so he’s more life-like!’

Perfect combat type Orc statue.

As special image settings, he made the teeth large and thick. And then a larger size and grotesque nose, eyes filled with selfishness, the Orc statue was born. A face that even kept the devil away, it was hard to keep your eyes open and the body covered with muscles was at least twice as great as a normal Orc.

Ttiring!

Fine Piece! You completed the Monster Orc statue!

An artist with normal sense would absolutely fail to create such a statue. Completed with excellent dexterity, but it seems it would be better to put it in storage without having it see the light of day.

Artistic value: 1.

Special Effects:

Gazing at the Orc statue will increase health and mana regeneration by 5% for a day.

Movement speed increased by 15%.

Intellect decreased by 10.

Charm decreased by 200.

Strength increased by 20.

Agility increased by 10.

Charisma increased by 60.

Leadership increased by 50.

Can stop the crying of a crying child.

Those with low courage, just by looking at the Orc statue will become severely atrophic.

Effects don't stack with other sculptures.

Until now completed number of Fine Pieces: 6.

- Mastery of Sculpting skill has risen.
- Fame increased by 46.

- Fighting Spirit increased by 1.
- Endurance increased by 3
- Charisma increased by 3.
- Fortitude increased by 5.

The Orc statue was completed. The low artistic value bothered him a little, but Weed regarded it fortunate that it wasn't an abomination. Even though he created it, he feared such a dreadful Orc would emerge in his dreams.

Looking at the statue head on, regardless of the reason, he wanted to smash it! He wanted to shatter it with Destruction Sculpture on the spot!

‘But I painstakingly created it, so it's like my child...’

Weed's heart was captivated. However, even with affection, he would have to adapt as much as possible to the damn statue.

Weed instead of using Destruction Sculpture cast another skill. The first use of Daron's sculpture skill! The secret art!

“Sculpture Transformation!”

You have used Sculpture Transformation.

The sculpture skill that uses boundless affection to make the sculptor resemble the sculpture.

Weed's appearance gradually changed.

His height increasingly grew and rugged muscles were created. Hair grew covering his entire body, and then after a while, his appearance completely into an Orc. Even the back of his hands and the inside of his feet was completely Orc. Height obstinately grew, changing his eye level. The thickness of the limbs was different and he gained a plentiful belly.

“Successful? Chwiik!”

Until now he was able to speak normally. But now the exclusive property of Orcs, the chwiik sound emerged.

“This, chwiiik. Strange. Chwichichichiik!”

Weed tried to keep his mouth shut but his teeth were too large to close it.

Body type has changed, many of the worn equipment are unable to be used.

After the reverse transformation you will be able to equip it again.

Whole body can wear iron armor or heavy clothing.

Depending on the type of species, new equipment must be

obtained.

Due to Sculpture Transformation, strength and agility slightly increase.

Intellect and wisdom will fall to the lowest level.

Art stat is reduced by half.

Charisma rises significantly.

Will remain valid until Sculpture Transformation is released.

He confirmed through the character window. Strength, agility and vitality increased, whereas other stats reduced slightly. The blow was especially great in art and wisdom. In addition, with the exception of his sword and cape, all his armor and gloves could not be worn.

“In transformed state, choeik! I won’t be able to use? Chwiiii!”

The race itself was different so it couldn’t be helped. Trudge. Weed unfamiliar with his steps climbed the Yuroki Mountains filled with Orcs. He walked with steps like a waddling duck, but with his great height, he was immediately able to climb the mountain.

Chapter 7: Simple-Minded Orc Karichwi

Mountains were swarming with Orcs!

Orc scouts. Orc champions. Orc warriors.

In the past Weed had been in lots of different situations and thought he'd keep his cool whatever happens, but now even he couldn't stay unfazed.

'If they see through my act - I'm done for.'

Weed was soaked with sweat, as he was climbing up the mountain slope.

However brave one considered himself, it would be hard to match your behavior, when there're only Orcs all around.

There were Orcs in Rosenheim kingdom too, but their levels ranged from 80 to 130. So you could always run away from them if something went wrong.

Here, in Plains of despair, monsters were much stronger. Even Goblins and Cobolds, which were considered the weakest monsters in the game, had different combat strength depending on the area they lived in.

And in this land Orcs had to fight for their territory since childhood. They were fighting giant monsters, so their level and therefore strength far exceeded that of their brethren from Rosenheim kingdom.

But the scariest part was not their strength, but their countless numbers! If something was to go wrong here and he has to run away, he'll be chased by thousands of Orcs.

Weed had no intention of experiencing 'death by Orcs' hands in Plains of Despair'. That's why he tried to be careful not to attract any attention.

“Chwiiiik!”

Weed accidentally met the gaze of one of the Orcs standing in front of him. Level 210 Orc champion! Even some knights, known for their honor, like to stare others down to show their superiority, and this was an Orc captain.

“Chwiiiik!”

Orc glared at Weed, his eyes glowing with malice.

‘I'm in trouble.’

Orc's rude attitude made Weed frown.

‘I can’t blow my cover...’

First of all Weed decided to smile. A reliable approach, that never before failed to help him to establish a friendly relationship. A great interpersonal skill.

Weed made his best fake smile.

But he wasn’t quite used to his new appearance, so he involuntary knit his brows and the corners of his mouth were trembling a little. His oversized fangs shifted forward even more.

At that moment Orc champion looked away!

“Chwik! Chwik! Chwik!”

He got scared! Weed’s appearance alone managed to scare an Orc captain, so he said with a hint of superiority:

“Be careful next time. Chwiiik!”

“I will. Chwik. Chwik. Chwik.”

On Weed’s way up the mountain such incidents repeated a few more times. In front of Weed’s fearsome stature and appearance other Orcs were cringing in fear.

That way without any hindrances Weed reached the place, where Orcs were fighting a monster.

“I’ll kill everyone, everyone! Cwichwik!”

“Chwiiiik! This is our land!”

A few dozen Orcs were fighting a giant fire monster - a mix of a mantis and a centipede! It was breathing fire and crushing opponents with his weight.

Orcs were relentlessly swinging their glaives, but couldn’t pierce the thick skin of their foe.

The fire giant had level 280 - a very dangerous opponent. There were countless monster like this one in the Plains of Despair. That’s why this region was considered one of the most dangerous on the continent!

Weed watched the Orcs’ battle. No wonder they say that you can watch two things forever: a burning fire and a real fight!

‘If all Orcs die, I’ll get their items...’

Besides Weed was now left without any armor and it could be said that he was standing there naked.

Weed had to wait for the battle to end.

The fire giant was moving around at a great speed, coiling his entire body and breathing fire at nearby opponents. Orcs were dying one after another.

Weed was watching it calmly, when a realization came to his mind:

‘I’m not a human now. On my place no Orc would be able to mercilessly watch his kin die.’

Weed rushed forward, grabbing one of the dropped glaives on the way.

“Iyahap!”

He struck the distracted giant in the side with all his might. The giant, like a building, monster fell, rising a cloud of dust. Even after becoming an Orc Weed didn’t lose his strength and skill!

The fire giant acknowledged his new opponent. It hastily crawled aside, got up and rushed towards the new threat. Bursting with flames enemy was quickly approaching!

Weed instinctively jumped high into the air and landed on giant’s head.

“Sculpting, Chwiik! Blade, Chwiiik!”

Even in the Orc's body he was able to use the Sculpting Blade technique, but because of his lowered intelligence his mana was running out quickly.

On the other hand he was a lot stronger now.

Weed has swung the glaive down on the monsters head with all his might and just barely scratched it.

The glaive blade wasn't very sharp, but with every hit the wound on the giant's head was getting deeper.

“Kuwo-o-o-o-o!”

The fire giant was jumping and spinning its head, trying to throw Weed off.

If he was to fall, he'll be in a very bad situation. Weed knew it, so he firmly secured his legs position and was dealing one blow after another while maintaining balance.

Moster was raging so much, that it almost managed to shake Weed off, but in the last moment he managed to grab its antennae.

“Die already, Chwiiik!”

Of course hanging from a head of the head of the giant monster

was a lot harder than from a handrail on a bus. But Weed's training helped him not to fall off. He had perfect control over his body! When you have a foothold, you can properly use force. Weed clung to the giant's head like a cockroach and continued to deal blows.

Other Orcs weren't idling as well.

“We, Chwiik, got backup!”

“Chwiiik! To battle!”

Orcs attacked the monster, swinging their weapons.

The fire giant was breathing fire, twisting and jumping, but still couldn't stand against the united attack of Weed and Orcs and finally fell to the ground, dead.

Ding!

You have leveled up.

Hunting a giant in Yuroki mountains raised your Fame by 1.

Weed cried out happily!

It's been a while since it happened to him on the hunt last time.

Before, when he was immersed in battle over his head, he was often letting out occasional cries of joy.

“Chwiiiik!”

“Chwichwichwiiiik!”

Orcs started screaming delightfully as well.

A view, worthy of a great artist: Weed, standing on a giant’s head, and a happily screaming crowd of Orcs around him. From the side it looked like they joined forces to accomplish impossible!

But after every victory there was a very important thing to do.

Weed collected the loot.

You received the Skin from the back of Fire Giant.

After processing this material could be used to create armor. The armor, made from it will be lighter and a lot tougher than tempered steel, such materials were very hard to acquire.

“Thanks! Chwiik!”

“Chwichwichwit, you saved us.”

Orcs gathered around Weed and were thanking him. He helped them in time of great danger and they were very grateful to him. However even in such a moment some Orcs were looking away from him from time to time.

Such face wasn't easy to get used to!

But Weed was reassured by such reaction.

“Chwiik, you hunt such critters? Chwiit, you should have called me. I love fighting. Chwichchwiiik! I love gems and good items even more.”

“Chwii. We admit. You are a warrior. We are proud of you, Orc warrior.”

Similarities attract - this rule was working even in game.

Orcs, who liked to fight and hoard the most, immediately liked Weed.

“I see you for the first time. Where did you come from? Chwiiik!”

“I don't know. Chwi!”

Weed looked somewhere into the distance of plains with sad eyes. And though he tried to look as sad as possible, for everyone else it looked like he thinks of past bloody battles and slaughters.

“When i was 1 year old, my mother left this place with me. Chwik! We lived in plains. And now i returned. Chwiiik! Don’t ask any more.”

“As you say. Chwiik!”

“Let’s go hunt. Chwiik!”

“Okay. Chwi!”

Weed took the invitation and joined the Orcs’ party.

Anywhere, even among monsters Weed felt himself at home! Weed was master at assessing the situation and evaluating possible profit, whether it was a free serving of rice porridge or a free ride on the train. Since he was a child various difficulties he had to endure taught him to think outside the box and quickly adapt to situation.

“Wo-o-o-ah!”

“Chwiik, chwiik!”

*

All over Yuroki mountains Orc villages were scattered.

And after the hunt warriors from the party Weed joined invited him to their place.

“Chwiiit! Come with us.”

“May I? Chwik! Chwiik!”

“Yeah. Our family is big. Chwichwichwit. Good warriors, chwiiik, are welcome.”

“Chwik! Thanks, friend.”

Weed followed the Orcs deep into the mountains.

On their way he saw a lot of other settlements, big like human cities. They didn't have walls or castles, but had many big buildings. One such houses housed 10 Orcs, and there were more than a 1000 buildings in a settlement.

Orcs led Weed into one of such settlements. At the entrance Weed was stopped by guards.

“Not just anyone is allowed to enter. Chwiik!”

Weed looked at them calmly and said:

“You got a problem? Chwiik!”

An Orc-like demon! With the scariest face in the world.

Weed’s appearance was his best pass anywhere. And his companions tried to defend him too.

“This is our friend. Chwiik! We fought together. Chwik!”

“H-he is still n-not allowed. Chwik!”

“Chwiiik. He must call his name. Chwik! Then he can enter.”

Though guards’ hands were trembling, they still managed to give proper reply.

Weed stopped for a moment to think. To completely get into the role of an Orc he must get a new name. He completely forgot about it.

“I am Kari... chwi!”

He hastily thought of a new name - Kari, but his body failed him again and Orcs heard a different thing.

“Karichwi! Karichwi! Chwiik. Come inside.”

That is how Weed became Karichwi, as Orcs' names often ended in '-chwi'.

'That's how it is.'

Kari or Karichwi, it didn't matter for him.

Weed forgot the incident and entered the settlement.

*

"Chwiiik! Selling cheap."

"Chwik! Selling even cheaper!"

"Chwiit! I sell cheap too."

A lot of things in the Orc village was similar to human settlements.

Orcs were selling armor and weapons in their stores. Most of the items were made here, in this settlement, so they were of poor quality.

But the prices were sky-high.

"Chwik. This rusty cracked glaive, chwiiik! You want it?"

Everyone wants it. I'll give it to you just for 60 000 gold. Chwiik!"

The glaive with attack power of 20 and 10 remaining points of durability costed 60 000 gold! Outrageous scam. Simple Orcs thought, that if they call high prices they'll become rich quickly. That is why they tried to sell everything at ridiculous prices.

The cheapest herbs costed 20 000 gold, and cheapest armor - 50 000. Glaives, that were more or less useful, were priced at 150 000 gold and more.

Weed was very curious, so he asked one of his companions:

"Chwiik. Do they really manage to sell anything?"

"Chwichwichwi. Never saw it once. Chwii. Stupid idiots."

"Chwiik. Oh, you are certainly not like them."

Orc, praised by Weed, shrugged.

"Of course. Chwiik! If it's not getting sold, you should ask at least 2 million gold!"

"..."

Weed was speechless.

But even harder challenge was awaiting him. Female Orcs from the village! By human standards Weeds appearance was terrifying, but in this place he was popular.

“Strong hands. Chwichichwi!”

“Powerful chest. Chwichichiik.”

“Thick fangs, harder than an axe.”

“With jaw like that his throat won’t run dry in the rain. Chwiik! And look at his nose!”

“Wide shoulders and muscular body.”

“My ideal. Chwiiiik!”

Women were leaning against Weed, displaying their affection. Some of them were winking at him, others were caressing their chest.

Even the bravest man would be scared in this situation. Such an insistent affection made Weed wish to leave the settlement as soon as possible.

Even though they were women, they was a huge crowd of them!

“What are they doing? Chwiik!”

“Women love strong. They love you. Chwiik!” - replied one of his companions with envy.

*

Living with Orcs in one house, Weed was tormented most by two things.

First was females.

At any time of day and night they were tirelessly trying to get his love. They were doing everything a woman in life could think of.

That would never happen to an underage. But Weed was officially recognized to be over 20, so his account was adjusted accordingly.

For adults in the game there were provided special services. The night life. Pleasures, available only for adults!

But who would want to share a bed with an Orc? Surely not Weed.

‘I can’t lose my virginity like this!’

He was trying to avoid meeting females at all cost.

The second thing was food.

Orcs were eating half-raw, barely cooked food. Weed, who was almost addicted to good food because of his high cooking skill, couldn't get used to the tastes of his new brethren.

The tasteless barley bread was a lot better. He was often dreaming about it now.

Though sometimes there were breaks in his torment, for example, when they were coming out of the settlement to hunt. Weed was always going first, marching with his glaive raised high.

“Chwiik! I smell enemy!”

They encountered the Minotaur Lord! Huge, horned monster with an axe. And even though the Minotaur Lord was menacingly swinging his weapon, that didn't stop Weed.

“Chwichwii-i-i-ik!”

Weed tightened his grip on the glaive and rushed forward. Simple, ignorant, aggressive and merciless Orc led his party into fight.

“All, all, all, attack! Chwi-i-i-ik!”

*

Yoon Chunhee was logging into Royal Road every night.

She was a summoner and her in-game name was Seirin. At character creation she picked the half-elf race, so she had small height, like a dwarf.

“With the power of our contract I summon you. Come, Basilisk!”

Casting the summoning spell took almost all of her mana, but 3 basilisk helpers appeared besides her. These monsters looked like lizards. They were poisonous and had good defence, so she was always summoning them when hunting.

With basilisks’ help it became a lot easier for her and her partner to deal with 2 knights.

Female thief finished last of the knights with a backstab.

“Phew! We won somehow.”

The thief wiped sweat out of her forehead and approached Seirin.

“Good job, sister.”

“You too, Lami.”

Seirin and Lami were sisters with 3 year age difference.

“Pheew, let’s rest a bit.”

“Yeah. And i need to restore mana.”

They were hunting in a newly discovered dungeon. Because of their high levels they were first to discover it and now were trying to use the received bonuses to the fullest.

Sisters were sitting on the ground and talking.

“Hey! Remember that guy that came to our school at the festival? His name is Lee Hyun. He’s the older brother of my friend, Hayan. He’s of the same age as you, isn’t he?”

Seirin smiled slightly.

“True.”

“You know him?”

“Yes. I do. Met his sister too.”

“I see... But you’re not usually interested in guys, even popular actors. And you’re not going out with anyone...”

“I’m just not interested in them.”

“So, you’re interested in him?”

“Him - yes.”

Seirin never hid anything from her sister, as they had good relationships, and Lami continued to question her.

“Could it be... he’s the one you like?”

“You guessed right.”

“Woah! Didn’t know that’s your ideal. So you like athletic guys?”

Lami couldn’t forget as well how Lee Hyun passed 3 challenges and won the princess saving competition. No one, who saw it, would ever forget.

When Lee Hyun was passing the 3 challenges, he was moving and popping flying water balloons so fast, that i seemed like a magic trick.

“Not because he’s athletic. No. I didn’t know he’s like that.”

“Then why do you like him?”

Lami was very curious.

If not his athleticism, then what could it be? His face and height were pretty average, and there were rumors that he didn't finish the school.

“He's a family man. He's always thinking about his family first, cares for it. If you marry someone like him, you'll always be happy. Right?”

*

“What do you do for a living?”

The guy scratched the back of his head and replied the girl:

“Nothing.”

“Woah. Not even going to university?”

“I do... But it's boring and i think I'll drop out.”

“There's nothing to be proud of... You should have stayed silent about it.”

The girl got up. She was about to leave the room when she heard something that stopped her.

“What’s the point of going to university? I’ll be working at my father’s company anyway.”

“Father’s company?”

The girl suddenly started to like that guy.

She was sure, that she was the most beautiful girl in the club today.

“Yeah, well, that’s just a small company though.”

“How small is it?”

“Well, there’s about as many employees as people in a small town.”

“...”

“The sales... or what’s that called? Anyway it’s about same of a small city.”

“..!”

The girl was speechless.

She examined the guy's clothes and it looked like it was true.

‘Dressed in all the brand clothes. Even shoes are from the latest collection, sold only by reservation.’

The guy handed her the phone.

“Put in your number.”

“I’m not that kind of girl.”

“I see. That’s why I would like to talk to you more.”

He easily got her number.

When the girl left the room the other guys started to talk excitedly.

“You rock, Jihoon!”

“This time it was under 5 minutes.”

The girl was outstandingly beautiful.

Even if the waiter didn't present her as a 'rare beauty', one look at her made all the guys in the room feel like wolves.

But Choi Jihoon didn't react much.

'I won't even remember her tomorrow anyway.'

His friend thought he was very lucky to have a life like that, but Choi Jihoon only felt boredom.

When you have a lot of money you have to be able to manage it. That's why his parents planned his life for him since childhood.

As a future heir he wasn't allowed to choose his friends, do what he likes, live like he wants.

Since he was a kid he was moving through his life like a robot controlled by his parents.

Only when he was sent to study abroad he started to get friends.

But even there he didn't have life of his own. He was just a man put on a rail and forced to go ahead. When you can't do what you like, your life becomes dull and tedious. And in Chi Jihoon's life there were too many restrictions.

However, once when he got free time he started playing Royal

Road and discovered another himself.

In that distant world there was a river.

He liked to watch its leisure and dignified flow, so he became a fisherman.

He was not interested in fish at all, he was just enjoying the stay and feeling like he is actually living.

Other players were struggling trying to raise their levels, chasing items, but he was just fishing.

With time Choi Jihoon reached 3rd Master level in Fishing. He became the best fisherman of Royal Road.

But he didn't care about it. He was just fishing.

Because of how silent he was, other players thought he was a gloomy and melancholic fisherman and tried not to bother him much.

But Choi Jihoon was indifferent about what others think about him. He just liked fishing, the flowing water was taking away all his worries.

And then a certain man appeared.

In an effort to raise his Fishing skill level as fast as possible he occupied Chi Jihooh's favourite place. This man was measuring everything by its monetary value. He was spending every day in an endless struggle for survival.

His name was Weed.

Choi Jihoon several times saw that guy laughing excitedly during fishing. He did it even in the most insignificant and rare cases, for example when he was finding a copper coin in a fish's stomach.

Weed was genuinely happy about such trifles.

Competing in fishing with him was fun. And at some point Choi Jihoon was completely absorbed by it. To the extent where every time he caught a fish his hands were trembling from excitement.

He couldn't remember last time he felt something like this.

Choi Jihoon liked Weed.

Ever since then he tried to stay by his side.

In Fort Odein he participated in the battle besides him, in the Basra dungeon he hunted in the one party with him. When he heard that Weed was going to hunt with Hwaryeong he quickly found her and bribed The leader of her party to let him join.

“I’ve got to go. Don’t look for me for a while, I’ll be very busy.”

Choi Jihoon got up and left the nightclub. On the street he was met by fresh night air.

He knew a place more enjoyable than any, even most expensive club.

The Royal Road.

The place overflowing with life was awaiting Zephyr.

*

Language out of this world.

A repetition of meaningless clamor.

Say what you want to say.

That won’t mean i’ll listen.

The voice of the singer sounded like sobbing. Sometimes pained, sometimes sweet. Accompanied by quiet sounds of piano, the girl was singing with a dreamy expression.

Certain gestures are forbidden.

Dialogues are almost non existent.

Eyes connected simply

then they told me

Desperation. Anxiousness. Sadness. Anger. Disappointing

aspirations. Affection. Love.

Feelings expressed through your eyes.

We choose what we eat.

Delicious meal. Then tell me with your eyes the next place you want to go.

Face me and look into my eyes, let me read your mind.

A world without misunderstandings and distortion.

With your eyes, I can understand you better even without your effort.

We can never truly understand each other's thoughts.

You cannot understand the basis of my actions, I accept that.

Because I may not even know.

What we see with our eyes are inaccurate and vague.

I'm not impressed with words. Please illuminate happiness.

Just as I look in your eyes.

Even for just a short while, don't divert your eyes from my face.

One glance, one heart.

So illuminate your heart.

Unless you have hard palpitating words,

And glances, then I'd have to say.

Eyes and voices heard through the ear

Enter and dig deeper into your heart.

With words alone, you cannot convey your feelings.

Speak to me with your eyes.

I love seeing your eyes.

Jeon Hyo Lynn was singing her debut song "Dialogue of eyes" on the Times Square.

The audience was listening, breathless.

It seemed like her tender and affectionate eyes were singing

along with her. Listening to her mysterious and dreamlike song, people felt like they were in paradise. And in front of them a bright and beautiful angel was performing.

But it wasn't just song that was fascinating the audience.

When Jeong Hyo Lynn was only starting to sing, she became known as a singer with a magnificent voice, but gradually she started to demonstrate her other talents.

The song wouldn't be complete without her dance. Her every move, every expression were bringing audience to such delight, that they were heartily cheering for her.

Jeong Hyo Lynn was graciously moving around the stage, as if telling everyone that she is a fairy born for music.

And that's what she was called by all the media.

After finishing her international tour show the 'Fairy of the stage' has logged into Royal Road.

'From now on I'll be rising my level. And I'll try the new dance for sure.'

In Royal Road she chose the profession of a dancer. Though she could become a great bard with such a wonderful voice, but she wanted to dance too much.

‘I want adventures, not just stand and sing. I want to try how it feels - beating monsters.’

To other people she looked like a graceful and innocent fairy. While actually she grew up as the oldest of 5 siblings in her family. She often behaved defiantly, like a tomboy.

Of course bards could hunt as well. But the dancer profession was still giving her more opportunities to participate in actual combat. Moreover, she could dance in different styles, so no one would recognize her moves, but in case of singing that would be impossible.

Thus, she became a dancer and started her adventure in Royal Road!

Fortunately, no one recognized her. She tried not to give herself out, and even made her character look slightly worse, than in reality.

*

“Let’s go on a journey too?!”

“That’s right. We only hunt here, it’s getting boring.”

“Not to mention the pyramid construction.”

Zephyr, Hwaryeong, Mapan, Pale, Surka, Romune, Iren and Mayron had gathered together.

They had all kinds of professions, some of them weren't very popular in the game. There weren't any real warriors or paladins, specialized in fighting monsters, among them. But their rare profession allowed them to find different ways to get out of tight situations.

Zephyr, with his high health, and monk Surka were responsible for close combat. In the dangerous cases when monsters were attacking in large crowds, Hwaryeong was putting them to sleep with a dance. Also she was boosting the party's attributes with her dances.

Pale and Mayron were shooting their bows from afar, besides them was Romune, who was casting destructive spells. Priestess Irene was providing support and healing to all party members.

Even merchant Mapan had his job. As a second professional skill he got the 'Touch of Luck' skill, that was increasing loot, left by monsters.

"So, where will we go?" - Pale asked everyone.

Surprisingly, the answer came from Irene, who was considered the most quiet in the party.

“Let’s go to the Lake of Souls!”

“Isn’t it a bit too hard for us?”

They learned about this place by accident.

Pale’s father discovered it personally during his journey around the world of Royal Road.

“Oh, what a great view! Gotta check the water!”

Pale’s father decided to interrupt his journey and take a swim. In such a spectacular canyon with a river, a real korean will never pass up an opportunity to at least take off his shoes and dip his feet into the water.

And then, while swimming, he noticed a path, leading to a lake. And of course he told Pale about it after returning.

Though at that time the average level of Pale’s party was 130, and considering the area, where his father was swimming, was inhabited by dangerous monsters, they would have hastily retreat after the first battle, leaving the bodies behind.

Therefore they still had no idea what kind of quests, treasures and dangers await them at the lake.

“We’ll be fine. We’re a lot stronger now.”

“Well, that may be true...”

“Let’s give it a try!”

Anticipating new experiences, they all voted as one to go to the lake. Having learned from Weed to always be well prepared to all the possible difficulties, they bought the supply of food, medicinal herbs, checked their equipment and were off on their way.

*

Lee Hayan couldn’t believe it.

An ottice from Korea University arrived, that stated that Lee Hyun has passed the first round. Of course, it was only the first round, there was an interview ahead of him, but half the way was already behind.

“Oh, it’s so great!”

She was staring at the notice, pleased.

She could earn her own university funds by part-time job and scholarship. But what about her brother...

Lee Hayan was afraid to talk about it with her brother. She was going to do it many times, but couldn’t gather the courage. What if

her brother will say, that it's a waste of money and won't even go to the interview? In his case it was entirely possible...

Chapter 8: Orc Wars

“Chwiik!”

After turning into an Orc, Weed had been thinking a lot.

‘What should I do to befriend them?’

Since he was used to thinking like a human, finding a way to approach to a completely alien race was turning into a hard task for him.

Weed had already got used to communicating with the Orcs, but he was still unable to gain any real friends among them. Then he decided that it was time to stop avoiding his new kin and start to take them for what they are. To treat them as if they were humans and his real comrades.

At first, he thought that it would be extremely hard. But after dealing with them some more, he realized:

‘Oh, it’s so... familiar.’

Weed quickly befriended everyone in his party.

Orcs! They weren’t that different from the Geomchis. Harsh! Aggressive! Violent: If something was not to their liking, they were

immediately pulling out their weapons! Reckless: they were attacking even the stronger opponents without a second thought! Their fists acted faster than their words, about 3-4 times faster.

“Catch, this is for ya. Chwiik!”

Weed cooked the food and handed it out to everyone in his party. Orcs were so indiscriminating and insatiable that they liked absolutely everything.

But even after accepting them for what they were, Weed still had problems blending in with this new environment. Same as humans, their society also had their own rules and hierarchy.

Regular Orcs, Orc warriors and scouts were at the lowest level of social ladder in Yurokin mountains. They had greatest numbers, but were just subordinates to other Orcs.

Commanding them were Orc champions, captains, elders and chieftains.

Captains were commanding groups of about hundred Orcs each. Elders ruled villages. Chieftains ruled and monitored domains consisting of several settlements.

And Weed was really hated by everyone above him at the command chain.

“Karichwi wasn’t born in our village. Chwiik!”

They were questioning his origins.

“He eats less, than we do. Cwik!”

Comparing appetites.

“Karichwi is too good looking. Cwiiit!”

Envied his appearance.

“Chwichwik! Females should be protected!”

After all, all the problems were because of the women!

Orcs were jealous and envious of Weed because of female attention.

“Ah, chwi! Even after I became an Orc, chwiik! The world won’t just leave me alone!”

Weed moaned. Because of all these constant challenges thrown at him by the gods, one would consider hanging himself!

‘Really, handsome guys are envied everywhere.’

He decided that the problem is in the fearful appearance, which he thoughtlessly sculptured, while being a human. And the only way to fix everything would be to start completely ignoring attention of the surrounding females.

As a result, they got angry at him as well.

“Chwiik! I don’t like those females. All of you, just take them away. Chwiik!”

And after he proclaimed that, females got even more offended.

“Chwik. He’s too full of himself.”

“Insolent bastard! Chwichwit!”

“Let’s banish him from the village! Chwiik!”

Angry locals took a long time to settle down.

And while many in the settlement didn’t like Weed, there were quite a few regular Orcs who acknowledged him.

“He’s from the winners caste! Chwiiit! This Orc deserves respect. Chwiik!”

“Chwichichiiit! Good fighter!”

“Cunning, chwiik. He would survive anywhere.”

Weed often fought and went to hunt. By order of the village elder, for the sake of peace and development of the village, every morning a hunting party was formed and of course Weed was always present.

“Cwiik!”

It usually consisted of Orc warriors and ordinary Orcs. Usually they fought against huge Minotaurs! Monsters around level 300.

Weed tightened his grip on the glaive.

‘Precious experience points!’

Minotaurs dual wielded blood-red axes and had more HP, Strength and Dexterity, compared to other monsters of the same level. So there were few people in the game who hunted them. Besides, they usually lived in places where players were rare.

But Weed loved to fight against monsters of all sorts.

Like a merchant appreciates every customers, he also happily greeted any monster.

Experience points - additional power!

Items - pure income!

With growing strength, rewards increased; and with additional loot, his future income also increased.

Weed was thinking using his own values and concepts.

“Moo! Dirty Orcs!”

Minotaur wasn't even slightly afraid of his opponents.

Regular Orcs were level 120 and Orc-warriors 210. And all of them were terrified by the ferocity coming from the enemy.

“Moo! Kill you all!”

Minotaur started to gain speed. He charged, swinging two huge axes. The Orcs in front of him didn't seem like worthy opponents.

“Chwii-i-ik!”

Weed jumped forward. His enormous body flew for about 10 meters and landed right next to the Minotaur.

“Chwiik! I'm your opponent!”

After turning into an Orc, his Wisdom and Intelligence got reduced, but Strength and Dexterity were boosted considerably. That's why he started to use regular attack instead of techniques that consumed loads of mana, which he was now short on.

“Chwi-i-ik!”

Minotaur hit with an axe what seemed to be a minor obstacle, but Weed deflected it with his glaive. A loud ringing echoed around from collided weapons.

Opponents stood in front of each other.

Sword and glaive are somewhat similar, but there are also a lot of differences. Glaive is wider and heavier, so it takes some time to get used to wielding it normally. In general, it is a slower, but destructive weapon.

Ding! Ka-Clang!

Each time glaive collided with monster's axe, there was ringing and sparks. With each hit deflected by glaive, Minotaur was forced to step back, and it was enraging him.

Normally, such a rusted glaive would've shattered a long time ago. But Weed had repaired, grinded and polished it to extreme sharpness.

Weed's strong resistance gave strength to his fellow Orcs.

“Chwiiiik!”

Minotaur finally grew frightened.

The wave of Orcs advanced fast! Hundreds of Orcs with glaives in hands run up and began to slash at the monster. Some of them died from Minotaur's attacks, but in return he also received many wounds from which he finally died.

As it is said, “you can not block ten hands with a single one”. In that exact manner Orcs were winning the battles, due to their numerical advantage.

And the real hunt began.

Hundreds of Orcs with glaives hunted huge monsters. While many of them got killed, the rest grew stronger. Because survivors gained new levels, the overall strength of the party kept growing.

Orcs survived despite being constantly threatened by many dangerous monsters. They survived thanks to their fertility. Some Orcs died, but others grew stronger, and to their aid came new growing up tribesmen!

Even knowing all this, Weed made sure that none of his friends died. He repaired their weapons, prepared food and bandaged them when it was necessary.

The big hunt continued!

Many simple-minded, ignorant Orcs roamed the surrounding lands slaying any monsters they met. Orc didn't possess any special techniques or other secrets, they just overwhelmed their enemy with the sheer numbers. If a dozen wasn't enough, then a hundred will come; and even if they die, even more will follow.

In such dangerous battles, many Orcs started to gather around Weed.

“Chwichwit, ignorant Karichwi, lead us.”

“Karichwi, you are simple, we are comfortable with ya. Chwiik!”

Because of his low Intelligence and Wisdom, Orcs regarded Weed as one of them! In addition he also had high Leadership and Charisma stats, due to which Orcs were willing to be led by him.

Nodding to the “recruits” in agreement, Weed continued the hunt.

Although he received command of the new “heads”, fighting became harder because of them. Because they were all one big group, the one to last hit the enemy, received over half the XP.

The rest of experience was distributed almost equally, regardless of your contribution to the battle. And Weed had to restrain his greed for experience points.

‘I have to stay smarter than these greedy Orcs...’

If he focuses on getting the maximum amount of experience, He would risk losing all the friendship with these Orcs. At the same time, if he holds back, it may very well lead to his death at some point.

That’s why Weed just fought as much as possible. He attacked the monster first, did as much damage as he could and if there weren’t too many others fighting the same monster, aimed for the killing blow.

Not to mention that a large number of battles was the main point of Weed’s early game strategy. From the first day he attempted to boost his attributes as much as possible, and only then raise levels. As a result, fighting monsters of the same level was considerably easier.

By accumulating various skills and attributes, he became much more powerful than any other player of the same level! And with time, the difference continued increasing.

‘Hard work now will make it easier later on...’

He couldn’t count the times he had noticed players who do not pay attention to it. There have been cases when people reached level 250 without even getting their sword skill to an appropriate level. Those kind of players leveled up without improving their skills just because it would have required some hard work.

But for Weed it became a priority. He was very glad that Orcs hunted a lot. Surrounding lands were filled with monsters, and all he did here was fighting them, putting trade skills and sculptural mastery aside for now.

At some point Weed reached 295th level.

Pale's party's hunt at the Soul Lake was in full swing.

Before, they would not have dared to approach this place, but now, after raising their levels and with the help of Hwaryeong, Zephyr and Meyron, they decided to give it a try.

Here they encountered terrible water spirits and fishlike monsters!

After fierce and lengthy battle most of the group left the game, and only Pale and Mayrun stayed for a date next to the lake.

Pale actually liked to chat:

“And so... Actually... And then...”

He met a girl that he really liked.

Pale wanted to tell her all about his life and adventures in the Royal Road. Especially since they met through this game.

He told her about the heavenly city Lavias.

“What? Really?”

Meyron’s eyes sparkled when she heard about the first steps they took as beginners, their first quests and how they explored the city in the sky.

“How did Weed chose a profession of sculptor?”

“As far as I know...”

Pale also talked a lot about Weed. He also shared the secret that it was Weed who destroyed the vampires in the province of Mort.

You have completed the quest: “Orc provisions”

There are many dangerous monsters preying on regular citizens in the surrounding countryside. Catch them with a hunting party and feed their meat to the young.

Difficulty: C.

Reward: Depending on the result - equipment, precious stones and ores.

Restrictions: Orc race only. Or those capable of shapeshifting into Orcs due to magic or other means.

Orc Chieftain and Elders were also giving missions, however, the Chieftain lived in a neighboring village, and the Elders weren't easy to get friendly with. But Weed didn't despair, and continued to hunt a lot and do quests. He didn't receive any good items for them, but rewarded ingredients and ores were rare.

Besides, hunting monsters awarded him with precious experience. Not just the XP points he received for kills, but also new knowledge and information. Most of the monsters in the Lands of Despair were over level 300 and often possessed unique abilities. It was very easy to make a fatal mistake in the first encounter.

Alongside with the Orcs, Weed was fighting against various monsters. Sometimes even faced Dark Elves. Even though they were small, they kept using elemental magic and proved to be worthy opponents. But it didn't stop Weed from defeating them and gaining even more respect inside Orcs village.

This way Weed explored most of the Yuroki mountain range.

To his surprise, the Dark Elves fortress looked as menacing as the Citadel of Seraburg in Rosenheim Kingdom. And with all the magical weapons installed into the walls, the fortress became virtually impregnable.

“We’ll capture it! Break through! Nothing shall stop us! Chwiik!”

Elder looked at Weed with warmth.

This huge Orc was able to gather the meat of the most dangerous predators and complete his task. As a reward he received a lot of ore suitable for forging high quality weapons.

Old Orc closed his eyes.

“Chwik. When I look at you, I remember my youth.”

“Thank you, Elder. Chwiik! - answered Weed with respect.

Usually Orcs talk among themselves very crudely, and Weed tried to adhere to these rules. But to every rule there is always an exception, and here it was the Elder, the first influential Orc to support him. He helped Weed to buy a house, gave him advice and of course various quests.

Only the most famous and powerful Orcs, who managed to live to a ripe old age, became Elders. And although they already lacked strength, they still retained their influence and knowledge, allowing them to supervise young Orc captains.

“Chwiik! Now I’ll tell you about our mountains...”

Elder had already told Weed many interesting things in the past. About Yuroki mountain range. About all kinds of monsters, their skills, abilities and where they lived!

Sometimes his speeches dragged on for so long, that he wanted to yawn, but Weed carefully listened to it all. Most of the time elder kept to the relevant information and some of those stories were really incredible.

Weed eagerly absorbed all the new information.

“Dark Elves - are our enemies. Recently they’ve started to do strange things. Chwilit!”

“What strange things? Chwichik!”

Elder wrinkled in discontent.

“Chwiiiik! Karichwi, you know that they, like people, have built a fortress.”

“Chwichwit. So what?”

“The walls are very high and thick. Chwhik! Monsters can no longer get close to Dark Elves and keep attacking us instead.

Chwiik!”

Elder was very sad because of current situation. More and more monsters came to the borders of the village, and they were becoming more powerful each day.

For Weed, on the other hand, it was good news. More monsters means harder battles and above all, more XP!

“Chwichwik! And we don’t like having that huge fortress above our village. We decided to attack the Dark Elves. 25 chieftains from neighboring lands support this idea. Cwiik. We are getting ready to attack. When sky turns bright and then dark 10 times, we will attack Dark Elves fortress. Karichwi. Come with us!”

Ding!

New quest: The prosperity of Orc tribes.

From long time ago, Yuroki mountains were dominated by the Orcs. But now the Dark Elves decided to challenge their position. With their magic, marksmanship and alliance with the dark creatures they’ve become a serious threat to Orcs’ future.

Difficulty: Race quest.

Reward: Depending on the result - precious stones and ores.

Restrictions: Orc race only. Or those capable of shapeshifting into Orcs due to magic or other means.

War between Orcs and Dark Elves!

It will decide who will rule in the Lands of Despair.

With that said, Weed being so focused on the hunt, experienced a shred of regret.

‘I was hunting so well, gaining levels and items...’

Soon the whole mountain range of Yuroki will host the final battle. Although Weed was indignant inside, he kept a calm facade for the benefit of the elder.

Seeing this, the old Orc continued:

“Karichwi! If you are a brave Orc, chwichichik! You must take part in this battle!”.

Do you accept the Quest? If refused, you might get exiled from this Orc village.

“Yes. Chwiik! I will fight those dark bastards.”.

You’ve accepted the Quest

Before the battle between the two races Weed canceled the Sculptural transformation and came down from the mountains. He was expected by warriors and priests of Freyja.

“Captain, you're back!” - Exclaimed happily Hosram.

“Yes. And how are you, hungry?”

“If only a little.” - answered Buren.

Weed had been regularly gathering, taking or buying food from the Orc village and giving it to the hungry soldiers.

‘Oh, they are like leeches.’

Weed certainly didn't have any parental feelings of wanting to find food for their “children”. He just wanted to spend as little as possible on all these slacking off soldiers, or as he called them in his mind, pigs.

‘They sleep, eat, and don't even do anything productive!’

But Weed kept displaying his friendly smile.

“Then I'll feed you soon. I just got wild boar meat, just have to cook it now.”

In his travels through the mountains, he not only hunted monsters. but also regular animals. In the last campaign he managed to catch a whole family of wild boars.

“Wow! Thank you, Commander!”

As soon as they saw meat, the eyes of surrounding soldiers shined. Using a variety of spices and seasonings, Weed perfectly fried it. Also, for the first time since that drinking party with Geomchis long time ago, he opened some of the tinctures from his stock.

“Eat and drink to your hearts’ content.”

“Thank you. Yummy!”

Warriors consumed this extremely delicious dish with great pleasure. But the royal knights constantly grumbled.

“Oh, I haven’t eaten meat in a long time.”

“They served it every day inside the palace.”

“This proves to be pretty good.”

“Well, there’s a bit too much garlic and onions.”

While warriors, knights and priests ate, Weed took care of their equipment.

“Armor repaired, weapons sharpened, clothes ironed!”

He carefully examined all the equipment and finished just before dinner ended.

“Everyone, get ready for the battle!” - Addressed them Weed.

“Yes!” - shouted the soldiers.

“To battle? Well, we’ll get ready then.” - Answered the knights.

Priests blessed all of the gathered warriors. Knights boosted this effect even more with their prayers.

Weed shouted:

“Calling the Death Knight!”

“Sir, you called?”

Answering with a nod, Weed sighing heavily, finally took off the tiresome Crimson Necklace of Life and took out from his bag and equipped the Black Necklace of Life with a level 400 Vampire Lord

Tori, trapped inside.

“Phew...”

Weed still couldn't bring himself to activate the necklace. Not that he didn't trust knights and priests, but in the following battle all their lives will be put on the line.

“I summon the Vampire Lord!”

Immediately after his cry, a scarlet light blossomed in the middle of the black stone. As if someone dropped there a drop of blood. And then in a flash of darkness he appeared. A tall, slender man in dark cloak and with pale skin.

Vampire Lord Tori smiled.

“Ooh, it's been a long time since I saw this beautiful world. Is this sunlight?”

Vampire's fangs grew and flashed. His blood-red eyes looked with interest at the people gathered in front of him.

Tori radiated such power and authority, that the feet of the soldiers started to tremble.

Coming out of nowhere black clouds covered the sun. The ground got covered by cold fog.

Weed exchanged glances with Death Knight and turned toward the Vampire Lord.

He couldn't afford to suffer the same losses as the last time. Tori had an incredible abilities: transforming his enemies into stone, turning into a bat and moving with lightning speed. But the worst of it was his vampirism.

By draining his victims, Lord could restore his health and mana as many times as he needed, therefore they had to finish this as quickly as possible.

‘Both Death Knight and me got a lot stronger. We need to exhaust him together as much as possible and then finish with the help of Priests magic. No matter how strong a Vampire he is, he won't be able to handle this...’

Yes, they were faced with a formidable level 400 opponent, but these warriors weren't normal either. Sharpened swords, polished armor, bonuses from food and sacred blessings.

Besides it was the daytime. And they were outside of a dungeon!

Boss battles are usually hard because they are boosted by half inside their lairs.

Three hundred paladins and a hundred priests.

Last time Tori killed most of the warriors, but now, during the day, he would have difficulty unleashing his full power. Even though he covered sky with the clouds, part of his abilities only got boosted during the night.

As a precaution, Weed also prepared his trump card - the Sculpture Destruction. He intentionally summoned Vampire not far from his Mercenary sculpture.

‘I would like to avoid using that ability...’

But Tori didn’t move and quietly stood there.

“O-o-oh!”

Vampire Lord noticed Seoyoon’s statue in mercenary clothes.

“B-Beautiful! Is this really a sculpture? Even if the most beautiful girl in the world were to be turned into stone, it wouldn’t compare with this.”

“ ... ”

The Menacing Vampire fell in love with Seoyoon.

“Art! Art! Art! It’s power makes this boring eternal life more dynamic. Children of the Night love art. It’s because of this passion I’ve settled in the old castle. All art in the world belongs to me! You

wouldn't take it from me. I, Lord Tori, the greatest heir to the true blood, will punish you, puny humans.”

Finally, the battle with Vampire Lord began!

Weed and Death Knight both rushed at the Vampire.

“Blessing! Sculpting blade!”

Protective blessing of the High Priest's ring activated immediately.

Weed dispelled Orc transformation even before entering the camp, so he already had enough mana to use all his skills.

Usually he would be aggressively attacking his enemy, dealing multiple wounds. But now Weed acted differently.

He gathered all his strength for a single powerful attack!

Simple, but at the same time very dangerous tactic: betting everything on this single strike, he's bound to lose rhythm and open himself for a counterattack.

But Weed still decided to do it.

“Sword Kaiser!”

His most powerful technique. He has used up all his mana on this single attack.

Cold sword pierced Lord Tori's chest. The wound and surrounding it flesh started to quickly freeze under the effects of this sword.

This new sword lacked blessing compared to his last one, but it had higher Attack Rating and was freezing it's victims.

Weaker monsters would just freeze to death, and even if they survived, their speed would be greatly reduced.

After taking this hit, Vampire's health dropped by 30%. Vampire just started to recover when another attack hit him.

“Deadly blade!”

Death Knight's sword penetrated Tori's side. At the same time, Weed pulled out his sword and jumped back.

“A-a-a-a! I'll suck your blood dry right now!”

Vampire got very angry, and his eyes seemed to fill with blood even more.

“Blade Whirl!”

Tori's blood drops along with sharp as blades gusts of wind flew in all directions. But Weed was ready for something like that.

All the warriors have already retreated to the safe distance even before the fight began, and this attack didn't even reach them. While both Weed and Death Knight charged into the middle. The eye of the storm is often the safest!

Having avoided this spell, they continued to attack their enemy. They circled Tori while using their strongest attacks.

Vampire's health kept dropping quickly.

Priests weren't resting either.

As soon as Whirl stopped, all the priest raised their hands in spellcasting:

“Healing hand!”

Vampire Lord's body was enveloped by bright light.

Normally, people would be healed by holy magic, but on undead species, which Vampire certainly belonged to, it had the opposite effect.

During the first minute of battle Tori's health already dropped by

half, and he was forced to use his trump ability. Vampirism!

He was unable to drink Death Knight's blood, therefore his aim was on Weed who kept circling around. But each time Tori tried to grab him, Weed kept slipping through his fingers.

Priests kept constantly using their spells and situation for Tori was quickly turning for the worse.

"I... I need a victim... Thirsty, blood, health!"

Realizing that if he doesn't do something quick, his life will soon end, Tori rushed toward the royal knights and soldiers who protected priests.

"A-a-a-ah!"

Terrified, Soldiers scattered in all directions, but one still fell into Tori's hands. His eye got filled with despair.

"B... Blood!"

Tori sunk his teeth into the neck of his victim. This weak soldier, of course, was hardly enough to sate the Vampire, but still helped to restore some of his health and mana.

But while he drank blood, priests continued using their spells on him, as a result, his health not only didn't increase, but actually

dropped slightly. At that moment Weed jumped behind Tori, dealing final blow and ending his life.

Lord Tori burst into dust while terrified soldier fell to the ground. Thanks to the priests healing him all this time, he actually survived with just a serious scare.

After this fight Weed started summoning Lord Tori each time he returned to the camp. While those victories he didn't receive any XP points, he still could practice his sword skills while fighting a powerful opponent.

The only one who didn't enjoy these battles was the Death Knight. Not long ago he went through something very similar and secretly pitied the fearsome Vampire.

Every day for a week Weed continued summoning Tori for a new battle. Each time Vampire felt more and more depressed. In the end, he bowed his head.

"You have the right to give me, the heir to a famous family, your orders. Knowing about your talents in art and leadership, I'll entrust myself into your hands."

And then Tori gave Weed a drop of his blood.

Vampire blood! When drinking their victims, vampire could give some of their blood to turn one into his servant. However, this time Tori gave away his blood for an oath.

A Blood oath.

Special item: You've received Vampire's blood.

When it's used, Mana increased by 300: a onetime bonus for your profession.

Other statistics can both increase and decrease by a random value.

Charm +20

Charisma +10

Black Magic skill +2%

Faith -50

Unique items that increased mana pool were extremely rare in this game.

From that time on, Weed could summon Lord Tori at any time. It was going to be very useful, considering Orcs finally finished their preparations for the upcoming battle with Dark Elves.

Chapter 9: Hall Of Fame

Since early morning Lee Hyun was very excited.

Unexpectedly for him, the creator of Royal Road, Unicorn Corporation sent him an e-mail!

“We would like you to visit us.”

The message was sent by one of the heads of Public Relations Department, Mr. Chang Yoon Soo. But there was just one day left before the upcoming battle between Orcs and Dark Elves.

“Right when I’m tight on time... But i guess i have to go.”

Lee Hyun didn’t want to reveal his real name, but this time he was contacted by representative of Unicorn, so he didn’t think much.

For the past 50 years Unicorn has been making some of the most popular games in the world. Almost always they were receiving huge profits, not just from monthly game subscriptions, but from sales of comics, cartoons, movies and even an amusement park that featured recognizable game characters.

There was even a rumor that Unicorn has the largest amount of free cash in the country.

However, their business didn't always go that smoothly, Unicorn Corporation survived through multiple crises and huge competition from other game developers. A few years ago, the game Continent of Magic lured away a great chunk of their audience.

The number of players dropped dramatically and gone along with them, money. If they didn't do something extraordinary, they'd have to reduce the staff and stay at the background of the game industry for a long time.

And they did, creating the most innovative game in history - Royal Road. They changed the very concept of virtual reality and regained their lost position. And even more than that - they started to earn more money than ever before!

“What do they want from me..? I don't think i broke any rules. I'll have to make that visit.”

Lee Hyun washed his face and went to the laundry to rent clean clothes. He was working there at some point in the past, so he quickly agreed on the stuff, paid for clothes, redressed and headed to Unicorn Corporation.

To reach their main office he had to take the subway and then a few busses. It was a very long and complicated trip, but aside from that, a costly one which irritated Lee Hyun the most.

“I'll spend at least 3000 won just getting there.”

Lee Hyun was very worried.

Nothing in his life was easy so far!

When he by an incredible twist of fate managed to sell his Continent of Magic account, the money was taken from him the next day. And all those hardships he went through just to become a sculptor in the end! Not to mention his constant troubles with the sales of good items.

“I hope I’m not going there just to receive some souvenir and be sent home. They can’t do that. They shouldn’t...”

The event for players! Anything can happen there.

Lee Hyun left the bus. The street where the main office of Unicorn was located was occupied only by huge skyscrapers. Even at first glance everything looked expensive. The road was filled with shiny imported cars and all the people were wearing expensive suits.

And in this environment the building of Unicorn Corporation stood out the most. It was 4-5 times bigger than all the other buildings, and the small square in front of the building was filled with foreigners sitting on beautiful ornamented benches and talking merrily.

There were also many journalists that came to cover even the most insignificant events of Unicorn Corporation.

Among all these people Lee Hyun was a black sheep in his clean, but simple clothes. That was a bit unnerving, so without any delay he walked to the entrance at a quick pace.

However, as soon as he approached tall glass doors, he was stopped by guards.

“Excuse me, what business do you have here? For security reasons we don’t let in people without permit.”

“I’ve been invited by Mr. Chang Yoon Soo, he’s the chief of some section in the Department of Public Relations. My name is Lee Hyun.”

“Wait a moment. I’ll check.”

Though guards looked like overly muscular thugs, they were very polite with Lee Hyun.

‘I guess there’s a reason for that...’

While Lee Hyun was waiting, he heard some muttering behind him. He was very worried that he wouldn’t be allowed to enter and the money he spent on the trip would be lost in vain.

However, the guard quickly returned.

“We checked with Mr. Chang Yoon Soo. He didn’t think you would be able to come so quickly, so he didn’t have time to warn us. We apologize.”

“Ah, that’s ok.”

“The Public Relations Department is located on 43rd floor. We hope you enjoy your visit.”

Lee Hyun entered the building and took the elevator to the 43rd floor. All the way there he was worried that he would just be presented with some souvenir. That was a stupid worry. Such an important person wouldn’t bother to invite him for such little things.

The Public Relations Department was upholding the image of the corporation in peoples’ consciousness. It was separated in sections and Chang Yoon Soo was leading one of them. The Medium to Long Term Advertisement Section was considered one of the most important sections in the whole company.

“You arrived at floor 43. Public Relations Department. Have a nice time.” - said female voice from a loudspeaker.

The elevator stopped and the doors opened.

“Welcome. My name is Chang Yoon Soo.”

He was met by the section chief and a few subordinates. Chang

Yoon Soo led Lee Hyun to a quiet consultation room. There the secretary who was serving coffee asked Lee Hyun if he would like something to drink and he replied firmly.

“Honey water please.”

“Eh, we don’t have something like that...”

“Well, then ginseng tea.”

To replenish energy and maintain good health one should only use healthy food. Even if you do sports, if you don’t eat properly, your health will suffer.

Fortunately they had ginseng tea, so a little while later they received tea and cookies and began to talk.

Chang Yoon Soo was behaving like an open and friendly person. He briefly spoke about Unicorn Corporation and his department’s aims. He used many technical terms, so Lee Hyun didn’t understand much.

‘I don’t have to know all that anyway...’ – Lee Hyun thought, calming himself.

Usually in such conversations the one who knows more is first to get tired, and the ignorant one can sit back and relax. He just has to wait until the other party reveals their purpose to see possible benefits.

‘Looks like they’re not going to give me any souvenirs. So what do they want from me?’

Finally Chang Yoon Soo noticed that Lee Hyun wasn’t interested and moved to the main point.

“As you know, our company is featuring the recordings of the best players’ adventures on our website.”

Of course Lee Hyun knew that, he even watched them a few times.

The Hall of Fame was one of the main sections of their website. It hosted records of battles and adventures of the best players of Royal Road. Being in there was considered a great honor.

“Many players want to get into Hall of Fame, but the actual number is strictly limited by the company’s rules. The more players there are, the more dispersed the audience will be. So our rules only allow players with Fame of 6000 or more to be featured there.”

“That means I pass?”

“Right. So, do you agree to show your game records in the Hall of Fame? You will have to provide a record of your quest or battle once a week. That’s all.”

That was an unexpected offer.

The Hall of Fame was limited to the top 500 players, one of them being Bad Ray with the highest level in the game.

But Lee Hyun wasn't interested in it.

"I'm not looking for fame. And I wouldn't like it if people started to recognize me in Royal Road."

"Really?"

Chang Yoon Soo's eyes widened. That response was completely unexpected for him. Fame is one of the main desires of people! Even the main goal of Royal Road was to become an emperor and unite the continent!

So a player who refused to become famous was a mystery for him.

"You are, a very unusual person..." - said Chang Yoon Soo with admiration.

"Until now I have only met two types of players. First, those that wish to receive the reward corresponding to their abilities. Second, those that beg for it. The competition among the 500 players is huge and they try to improve their position by any means. But you're the first one I can't place into any category."

Lee Hyun was listening in silence.

‘Damn, I just spent money in vain...’

He was overwhelmed with regret.

But Chang Yoon Soo continued.

“In fact, when you’re featured in Hall of Fame besides the fame itself you get a small bonus. We pay small fees for advertising Royal Road. Depending on the popularity of your videos the fee may be changed, but on average it’s a few million won a month.”

“You said few million won?”

“Yeah. That’s what most players get. As you know there are a huge number of people playing Royal Road and the Hall of Fame is pretty popular. For your advertisements of the game we pay you money. Compared to the amount associated with mass media, the money can only be called chump change.”

“...”

Chang Yoon Soo continued to persuade Lee Hyun.

“This is your chance to become famous! Once you become popular in Hall of Fame you will get attention of media and they

will fight for the right to talk with you. And then you will be able to demand the decent reward for interview.”

At the beginning of the game most broadcasting companies were relying on broadcasting the adventures of high-level players. But the audience quickly became bored by it. Players with highest levels were spending all their time on hunting and raising levels. Few of them were able to provide a decent show that would be interesting to watch.

Then broadcasting companies changed their strategy and started inviting only outstanding players who managed to achieve something significant. And most of the candidates were picked from Hall of Fame.

“Our corporation is actively supporting this trend. We created the Hall of Fame to discover the real heroes. And now i met a player who doesn’t need all that and who just wants to enjoy the game. Lee Hyun, I want to say that you’re an amazing person.”

“ ... ”

Lee Hyun looked around.

All the assistants in the conference room were looking at him with admiration.

“He refused money and fame like it was nothing...”

“What a man!”

“He will never be slave to money.”

So they whispered to each other.

Lee Hyun took Chang Yoon Soo’s hand and paying no attention to the surprised looks said:

“Could you place me right to the top of the Hall of Fame?”

After the unusual visitor departed, the conference room stayed silent.

Chang Yoon Soo was looking at the empty mug of ginseng tea and thinking.

“So his name is Lee Hyun...”

“What’s wrong sir?” - asked the approaching assistant.

“Just can’t get this man out of my mind.”

So Junhee was working in this department for a long time and thought that she knew her boss well enough. But right now she

couldn't understand him.

Chang Yoon Soo was the main person behind Royal Road's advertising strategy. It was because of his hard work that the game became so popular.

The slogan 'The game where you can become an emperor!' was created by Chang Yoon Soo, and it had a great impact on the company's development.

And now was the first time she saw him lost in thoughts after meeting with an ordinary person.

"That's not like you. This is the first time you paid so much attention to an ordinary player."

"Me? Of course I would."

Chang Yoon Soo shook his head and handed her a document.

"Read it and you'll understand."

So Junhee read the document with great care. It was a file on Lee Hyun.

Royal Road was proud of its security system. Even the top managers of Unicorn Corporation weren't able to see players' level, profession, skills and items.

In Lee Hyun's file there was just a single line. Black letters on the white sheet of paper stating only one thing - the date he started to play. Lee Hyun registered in Royal Road exactly 9 months ago.

"I can't believe it! Not even a year since he registered?!" - exclaimed So Junhee in shock.

All the employees of the department were looking at them with interest.

"I didn't believe it too until I met him. It turns out in just 9 months he managed to get enough Fame points to get in top 500..."

"I can't believe it..."

"Most probably in these 9 months all he did was play Royal Road." - said Chang Yoon Soo quietly.

These words made So Junhee angry.

She was playing Royal Road since its release. Every evening after work. She was paid pretty well, so she could allow herself to buy good items from auctions. Still, after all that time her Fame barely got over 2500. With the combat profession of Wizard, she constantly hunted or did quests.

"Fame, even if you work hard, there's no telling if you will obtain

it.”

“Exactly.”

“Some even abandoned their beauty just to burn the midnight oil...”

“That’s why it will be interesting.”

“What?”

“I can’t wait for his profession or quest. The video will probably be released after a week, we will know then.”

Chang Yoon Soo stretched his hands and laughed with relief.

“It was worthwhile choosing this job. It’s been a really long time since something worth my interest appeared.”

Like the Orc Elder said, 10 suns and 10 moons passed and on the next morning the day of the decisive battle arrived!

“Chwiik!”

“Chwiiiik!”

“Chwichwik!”

Weed was looking at the Dark Elves’ fortress together with other Orcs.

“The morning is in the mountains. The red sun is rising, the mighty wind is blowing. Chwichwit. Heavy clouds are crawling across the sky, like if they know that the battle is near. In the battle against the Dark Elves I will be fighting in the front line! Chwik!”

With one foot set on the boulder and chest stuck out, Weed was reading his monologue!

“This sunny morning i feel hope. Chwichwik. Our courage and thirst for victory. Our noble spirit. Our souls. Chwiiik! I want to sing! Dark Elves are strong, but we will fight with song in our hearts. With the song of victory. No one will escape and we will be victorious!”

Weed was setting an atmosphere by reading a monologue. If the video was going to appear in the Hall of Fame, it will be seen by multiple players. He should create a positive image.

But he was doing his speech from a body of an Orc with huge fangs and terrifying facial expression, so he couldn’t make it seem deep and moving.

He wanted to read some poem in his monologue, but he didn't know any.

“Chwichwiiik! That's fate!”

Weed spat and returned to watching the fortress.

There was a brief rain last night and mountains were covered by thick mist. Sleepy, but already hungry birds were fluttering between sparse trees. Soon the sun will be shining at full power and the weather will improve. But for now it was still cold.

“A-aachoo! Chwiik!”

Even thick-skinned Orcs started to succumb to weather. Weed at least had a cape, which he tightly wrapped around himself, but other Orcs only had armor.

The temple of Necromancers was standing at the top of the mountain. The cliffs around it looked pretty steep and the only way to reach the gate was to pass through the Dark Elves settlement. But it was surrounded by 7-meter-high wall. Dark Elves were proficient in elemental magic and with its help they were able to quickly erect an impregnable fortress.

Moreover, at the base of the wall some kind of dark-blue smoke was swirling, which was definitely not something good. While watching the fortress, Weed saw a few times how some random birds carelessly flew into the smoke just to drop dead a moment

later.

And as a finishing touch the walls were filled with Dark Elves holding their bows. They noticed Orcs a long time ago and were just waiting to see what they were going to do. Were they to come closer, they would be immediately met with a barrage of Elven arrows.

‘To reach the Necromancers’ temple is one heck of a goal... How are we supposed to take this fortress?’

Besides Weed were his 20000 subordinate Orcs. But on the wall were no less than 10000 Dark Elves! Even though Orcs and Dark Elves had similar strength, in case of siege the advantage was clearly on the Dark Elves’ side.

“Karichwi, we believe in you. Chwiik!”

The Elder gave Weed a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

“I know. We will definitely win.”

“I trust you. Chwichwit. But let’s win today!”

“E-e-erm... It must definitely be today? Chwiik!”

“Yes. We have no food. Chwichwichwi.”

“ ... ”

Stupid Orcs! There were more than 20000 of them gathered, and not a single one of them bothered to bring any provisions.

‘We have no food and half the warriors got a cold...’

Weed wanted to just run away, but he couldn’t do it. All the Orcs were faithfully watching their new commander.

‘Damn it... This way I’ll die here.’

Many times during this quest Weed was walking the edge, but this time it looked like he would definitely fall. He didn’t see any way to get out of this situation.

‘If I’m going to die anyway, at least I’ll do it for a reason...’

Weed pulled himself together and looked around. He noticed something strange. Even though there was no wind, the trees behind them were rustling. After taking a closer look, Weed noticed a great number of Orcs coming out of the forest.

“Chwiik! Orcs from Chwibarr tribe arrived.”

The chieftain of Chwibarr brought another 10000 Orcs! And this was just the beginning. Wherever Weed looked, even in the far distance, the trees were shaking.

“Karichwi, I’ve brought 20000 warriors!”

“Holchwi tribe sent 15000!”

Weed was standing and with growing hope looked at the arriving reinforcements. The fortress of Dark Elves was located near the top of the mountain, and from every side more and more Orc troops were approaching. There were great many Orcs gathering in the Yuroki mountains today. Far too many.

“Chwiik! Chwit!”

Weed was involuntary making snorting sounds.

The Orc army looked like a huge tsunami. There were young and old Orcs, but most of them were battle-hardened veterans. And all of them came to fight besides him, leader of an army of 20000 Orcs!

“Baranchwi sent 8000. Chwichwichwit!”

“Gerbage sent 9000. Brought everyone!”

“Salchwi and his thousand fighters arrived!”

Messengers from every tribe were continuously bringing new messages.

Some of the arrived Orcs had already fought Dark Elves many times. This was evident from the burns and scars, left by Dark Elves' magic and arrows.

The armies of the 25 closest chieftains were going to gather to storm the fortress. 5 tribes couldn't come, but still the entire area around the Dark Elves settlement was filled with Orcs.

When the sun reached zenith the last tribe arrived, the number of Orcs reached over 400000.

The entire horde was behaving very loud, clanging with their armor and weapons and shouting all kinds of insults at their opponents. Such a great number of Orcs at their walls was making the Dark Elves seriously worried. Now they didn't look as relaxed as this morning, a lot of them were preparing spells in advance and holding them ready to use.

The chieftain Bulchwi, who was standing nearby, approached Weed with confidence.

“Karichwi, I heard about your courage. Chwiik!”

“Thank you, chwik!”

Bulchwi was a very strong Orc. During his short stay at the Orc village Weed heard many stories about this formidable warrior who bravely hunted wyverns.

The Orc chieftain continued:

“We want you to give us the command to attack, chwichwichiik!”

“Are you sure? Chwiik!”

“Yes. You deserve it. Chwiik! This is the tradition. When the scariest Orc leads the attack the enemy runs away in fear.”

Even though there were 400000 Orcs here today, there was no one scarier than Weed.

He gave his sculpture a too unusual and menacing appearance. And so Weed’s appearance played another trick on him.

Seeing Weed’s confusion, Bulchwi let out a friendly laugh.

“This is a great honor. Chwiik! I envy you. Go on.”

“...”

After being told that by such a respected Orc, Weed straightened his posture with pride. Surrounding Orc leaders and all the other Orcs were waiting for his orders, so he raised his glaive high and started to shout:

“Orcs! Orcs! Orcs!”

“Orcs! Orcs! Orcs!”

The 400000 Orc army echoed him. Mountains filled with their shouts. Ground started to shake under their feet.

“Orcs! Orcs! Orcs!”

“Orcs! Orcs! Orcs!”

Weed shouted even louder. The Orcs raised their voice as well.

When the volume reached its peak, Weed swung his glaive furiously and exclaimed:

“We’ll crush everyone! Chwii-i-ik!”

“Guo! Guo! Guo!”

Orcs rushed towards Dark Elves fortress like an avalanche.

Chapter 10: Road Selection

“Chwiiiik!”

Orc army was approaching the fortress of Dark Elves.

And though their advance was hindered by occasional trees and rocks, tens of thousands of Orcs reached the walls simultaneously.

Elves responded without delay:

“Wall of Fire!”

“Ice Storm!”

“Chain Lightning!”

Fire covered the ground, ice shards and lightning bolts rained down on the approaching horde. Orcs were dying in hundreds, but continued to press on.

When Orcs came close enough to the fortress, Elves started to use their bows. They were using enchanted arrows, freezing or blinding Orcs on hit.

Multiple traps were scattered on their way, spiked pits were swallowing dozens of Orcs at once.

But however well prepared Elves were, nothing was able to stop Orcs' advance.

“Chwiik!”

“Orcs! Orcs! Orcs!”

Rage was filling Orc warriors. They came to take revenge for all the pain, misery and deaths, caused by Elves! And despite all the resistance and defences Orcs finally reached the walls

“Chwiik! Start shooting!”

“At once! Chwiik! Fire!”

Orcs started to shoot their arrows back at Elves. Those, who didn't have a bow were throwing prepared in advance stones. Attacking from below was very hard, Orcs' accuracy was greatly reduced, but still Elves started to suffer their first losses.

From somewhere in rear ranks Orcs dragged a huge log.

Several dozen orcs lifted it and with their combined effort put one of its ends on the wall. Multiple warriors started to crawl up this log. Some of them fell off, but most of them successfully reached the top.

Fierce fights started to erupt on the walls.

This entire time Weed spent standing on a rock, watching with interest the battle unfold in front of him. Right before his eyes Elves summoned elemental spirits and sent them into the battle. Kasa's of fire, Undine's of water, Sylph's of wind and Noum's of earth. They were soaring in the sky and raining elemental spells on the ground below!

Everywhere he looked Orcs were fighting. Some Elves were even slipping out of the gates to employ guerilla tactics. Something was sparkling, flying, smoking, shouts were heard from every direction. Orcs were dying in thousands, Elves - in dozens.

“Chwiik!”

“Karichwi! I can't wait any more!”

“Yeah! Let's attack! Chwiik!”

Since the attack began, Weed and his tribe's army didn't move one step, and Orcs were starting to grow impatient.

“Chwichik! Still wait.”

Even though battle raged for a long time now, he still didn't lead his warriors into battle. Orcs didn't like it, but still obeyed his orders.

‘It’s ridiculous to be reckless in a battle.’

Weed sighed in frustration. Even though Dark Elves were greatly outnumbered, such a reckless attack on the fortress was incomprehensible for him. Orcs were pushing ahead and climbing up walls under constant barrage of spells from the enemy!

Not to mention that many of them caught a cold and their vitality was reduced. Storming such a well-fortified fortress without any battle plan! What could be more foolish?!

Such serious battles require planning in advance. If only Weed was given some time, he'd think of something and Orcs would have already taken the fortress. But now the Orcs horde was dying because of their own stupidity, and if he doesn't do something soon, the battle will only continue growing more violent and unpredictable...

The scene, observed by Weed could not be compared to the Battle for Fort Odein in any way. The scale was very different and the specific races, involved in the conflict, spiced up the situation.

‘The initiative is definitely on the Elves’ side.’

Weed was calmly analyzing the battle.

At first glance it seemed like it'll be definitely won by Orcs. They had far greater numbers and were quickly reaching the walls and

joining the battle.

But Dark Elves didn't give up.

They were defending a well-fortified fortress with plenty of arrows and correct troops arrangement, that allowed mages and archers to act with maximum efficiency. Besides despite the huge advantage in numbers, only 20 000 Orcs were able to participate in the actual fight at a time.

That number wasn't nearly enough to overwhelm the Elves. Besides they couldn't do much harm while shooting from below, as elemental spells, like wind, were preventing most of their arrows from reaching the top of the wall.

With only small losses Dark Elves were able to successfully repel the Orcs' attacks.

“Stupid beasts!”

“Pigs! At our walls you'll meet your end!”

Feeling their advantage, Elves were ridiculing their opponents. Infuriated by their mocking, Orcs were pushing even more viciously and dying in hundreds!

“Chwiik!”

“You! Coward! Once I get up there we’ll see who meets what end! Chwiik!”

Orcs were trying to break the gates, get a foothold on the walls, do anything to breach the Elves’ defences, but nothing succeeded.

In the first half of the battle the horde suffered great losses. More than 40 000 Orcs were dead.

Elves lost only a few hundred fighters. It was a good start for them, but it was still too early to celebrate the victory. There were still plenty of Orcs alive.

To secure their advantage even more a few hundred robed elves gathered on one of the towers. They waved their hands, whispered something, and finally simultaneously exclaimed:

“FLAME!”

A huge stream of fire shot from the tower. It was so strong, that even Weed, who was standing in the distance, felt the heat on his face! In a single moment flame engulfed and reduced to ash thousands of Orcs.

“Chwik?!”

“Chwiik! Chwik!”

Even after such a display of power Orcs didn't lose their fighting spirit. They were still pressing on their assault, though some of them had a frightened expression now.

Their confidence in quick victory disappeared.

At that moment Weed took a step forward.

'That's the moment I waited for.'

He turned around and looked at Orcs standing behind him.

"Chwichwiik! Now it's our turn!"

"Ka... Karichwi!"

"This is reckless, chwiik!"

Just a few moments ago they were eager to join the fight. But now Weed's suggestion seemed insane to them.

"No! Chwiik! Trust me!"

10 000 Orcs, led by Weed moved to the front lines. Other Orcs and their chieftains were making way for them. They quickly reached the fortress to join the fight, without getting hit by spells once! The Dark Elves ran out of mana and were now waiting for it

to regenerate.

The Moment Weed was waiting for finally arrived.

“Go! Attack! Chwiiiik!”

Weed’s huge body easily shot up the log and in just a few steps he was on the wall, swinging his glaive.

Dark elves were famous for their sharp eyesight, bow mastery and swift movements. And many of them were able to use elemental magic. But their mana ran out, bows weren’t of much use at such a distance and there wasn’t much space to move on the crowded wall.

Weed rushed into the crowd of Elves. His strikes were slaying one enemy after another. The orcs, who followed him to the wall were covering his back.

In close combat Dark Elves were using short swords and rapiers, so they couldn’t provide any decent resistance against Orcs, once they reached the top of the wall.

Over the next few minutes Weed and his warriors killed more Elves than all the other Orcs combined since the beginning of the assault.

It seemed that Orcs will finally be able to get a solid foothold on the top of the wall, but then Weed and his warriors suddenly

jumped off the wall!

“Wall of Fire!”

The place where Weed was fighting just a moment ago got engulfed in flames.

“A-a-a-argh!”

“It burns! Chwi!..”

The spell, cast by elven mages, burned not only Orcs, but nearby Dark Elves as well. Unlike humans, elves were very rational and didn't hesitate if the sacrifice of few was able to save the many.

After waiting for the spell to end, Weed climbed back on the wall and dived into the fight. If he saw, that Orcs significantly lowered Elves' health somewhere, he was immediately rushing there to finish them. He didn't mind using his fellow Orcs as a shield as well, and often used them to escape deadly fire spells. At the same time he was always ordering warriors from his own army to retreat when required.

There was only one thought in Weed's head:

‘I must use all the 400 000 Orcs to the fullest.’

His tactics was to strike the weak points and use Orcs to cover the

retreat! While Dark Elves were killing other Orcs, he was gradually gaining experience. During his first hour of fighting he finished off more than a hundred of Elves, and with the kills of the Orcs from his party added, the final result was even better. And though he didn't have time to check, he was sure, that his reputation among Orcs raised significantly.

When the Orcs' losses reached 70 000, Dark Elves lost only a little over 3 000.

'It's time to end this...'

There were still about 7 000 Elves defending the fortress, though most of them wounded and weary. They were only holding because of the walls. But they were still great archers nonetheless.

If nothing changes, they might be able to hold because of their great archery skills and win in the end.

"Keep it up!"

"Crush the Elves! Chwiik!"

Orcs, who were waiting under the fortress walls waiting for their turn to climb the log, were screaming in excitement, cheering for their fellow warriors, fighting on top of the wall. And then an Orc stepped out of the fighting crowd and stood on the edge of the wall.

"Oh, it's him!"

“The ugliest one!”

Both Orcs and Dark Elves were looking at Weed. And he, instead of going back into fight, jumped down from the wall and headed to the gates!

The Orcs, gathered at the wall were respectfully stepping aside to let him pass.

On the way Weed took the glaive in his left hand and pulled out a small figurine. The Hare figurine - one of the five small Fine Pieces.

“Sculpture Destruction! Let it become my strength.”

The figurine in his hand shattered into pieces and Weed’s body got shone brightly.

You used Sculpture Destruction.

Pain and grief fills your heart after destroying one of your Fine Pieces!

You permanently lose 5 points of Art.

Your Fame is reduced by 100.

For a day your Art attribute will be added to your Strength at 1:4 rate.

Sculpture mastery raised by 0.1%.

Over a thousand of his Art points got transformed into strength. And they were multiplied by 4 as well!

“A-a-a-a-ah!”

Weed yelled out and gripped the glaive with all his might. His huge arms were covered by bulging veins, his body filled with uncontrollable power. At that moment Weed didn't look anything like a person who could understand art of sculpture.

Weed approached the gate and slammed them with his glaive.

Klaaang!

The glaive got shattered into pieces and bounced out of his hand.

“Chwiik?!”

“Chwichwichwik!”

Surrounding Orcs were very excited.

Weed picked up the broken glaive and continued to smash the gates. With every hit more cracks appeared on the gates and around 10th they finally gave in and fell inside.

“Whoah!”

“The gates are broken, chwiik!”

Orcs started to shout excitedly.

Three of the nearby Elves immediately rushed to the breach.

“Don’t let the Orcs pass!”

“Grow it! Grow the new wall!”

“Use magic! We’ll hold him off!”

Three Elves attacked Weed with spears. They needed to get rid of the enemy as fast as possible to free space for mages to create a new wall.

“Die!”

A sharp spear tip shot towards Weed, but he just slightly moved his hand and deflected his opponent’s weapon to the side.

“At once! Attack!”

Three spear struck one spot simultaneously, but Weed wasn't there any more.

Even with his armor polished and clothes ironed, if he took those 3 strikes, his health would have dropped to a critical level. That's because his equipment was junk!

In his entire time as an Orc, Weed wasn't able to find or receive as a reward anything decent. And he didn't want to spend anything on buying or creating new gear. Besides because of his increased body size creating a fitting armor required more materials.

“Chwiiik!”

So all he had left was to dodge opponents' attacks. After using his overwhelming strength to deflect the next combined attack of Elves, Weed lunged forward.

The health of the Elf in the middle dropped by half, but Weed had to jump aside again to dodge the other 2 spears.

Weed was fighting on top of his ability, showing miraculous skill, moving bare inches from the opponents' spears. He was using everything he knew, both what he was taught and what he learned all by himself. His every move was full of strength and harmony.

As a result by the time the first Orcs reached the breach, Weed has already defeated all 3 elves and the gates were captured.

Weed smiled happily at his brethren and used Lion Roar:

“Orcs, chwichwiik, attack! Destroy! Loot! Kill!”

You used Lion Roar.

Fighting Spirit of nearby friendly troops increased by 200%.

All confusion has been removed.

Leadership increased by 195% for 5 minutes.

The Orcs, who were suffering great losses since the beginning of the battle were back in high spirits!

“Chwiiiik!”

“Fight, chwiriri!”

The horde was pouring into the fortress through the broken gates.

In this situation Dark Elves didn't have a choice but to retreat back to their village. The path to it was riddled with numerous

traps and Orcs, who tried to chase them had a hard time. Once more, like at the beginning of the battle, they were dying in hundreds, if not thousands.

But despite all the traps, magic and arrows of Elves, Orcs were advancing! The battle now moved to the edge of the village, where retreating Elves created another line of defences. They were holding for now, but they couldn't imagine what will they do when the main forces of Orcs arrive.

“Hey, it's mine!”

“I took it first, chwiik!”

Some Orcs started looting the houses.

Weed was watching it with tears. Though Elves didn't have much gold or silver, they had some very rare gemstones, fruits and animal hides. If he sold all of it, he would receive tons of money!

Weed was terribly jealous, but he couldn't stay and take part in looting.

First he has to complete the mission of the Order of Freya. To get into the temple! As fast as possible!

The temple of necromancers was located on a high cliff.

While Orcs were leading their fierce battle against Elves, Buren, Becker, Hosram, Dale and other soldiers were slowly and carefully climbing up. Even before the battle started, Weed planned their path and ordered to climb up.

“Huff!”

“Hold on.”

Soldiers were supporting each other and steadily climbing the mountain. As Weed didn't have any special equipment for this occasion, they could only count on their own strength. And if warriors were climbing more or less confidently, the weak priests of Freya were on the verge of death.

The only thing they could rely on was the Vampire Lord Tori!

He transformed into a giant bat and watched soldiers carefully so none of them falls to their death. And The Death knight was helping exhausted soldiers.

If even a single Dark Elf happened to pass above them at that time, they would be in a trouble. But all the Elves were distracted by the Orcs, gathered at their walls, so the soldiers managed to reach the top of the cliff without any casualties.

“Huh. Finally.”

Weed was already waiting for them at the agreed place.

“We’re here. No one lost. Now there’s nothing to worry about!”

Buren earnestly pounded his chest, but Weed wasn’t so confident.

‘I’d better rely on Orcs.’

Even though Orcs were dumb, they had great numbers and he didn’t have to mind their losses! But he had to protect the knights, soldiers and priests. If they die, he’ll lose the chance to get reward from the King.

“Hurry. Get ready, we’re going to the Necromancers’ temple.”

Accompanied by Death Knight and Vampire Lord, Weed went ahead.

“Chwiik! Who the hell are they?!”

When they were encountering other Orcs, Weed was just telling them:

“Those are my prisoners. Don’t touch them. Chwiit!”

“He caught humans here. I’m jealous. Chwiik!”

As Weed remained in the form of an Orc, all such random encounters were solved easily.

When they reached the temple, they saw dead Elves at the entrance.

Weed and his soldiers rushed into the dark interior of the temple. They had to hurry: if Orcs kill the necromancers before they do, the quest might not get completed.

There was a heavy and oppressing atmosphere inside the temple. The dark hallways was barely lit by dim torches.

“Chwiiiik!”

Somewhere far ahead the shouts of orcs and noise of colliding blades were heard. It seemed that there was a serious battle between Orcs and Dark Elves.

Weed ordered his soldiers:

“Hurry up. We must make it. Prepare for battle!”

“Yes, sir!”

The squad was quickly moving forward. On the way they saw many shiny things on the walls, but none of the soldiers slowed down.

‘The main goal is to complete the quest of Order of Freya.’

Like ghosts, they shot out of the narrow passage into a wide hallway. In its center a few dozens Elves and Orcs were fighting.

“Chwiik!”

“We will defend this place!”

Seeing such a convenient situation Weed exclaimed:

“Let no one get away, kill everyone!”

Soldiers blocked the way and priest raised their hands and cast a spell:

“By the beauty of Goddess that blinds all men. Blind!”

Blinded Orcs and Elves scattered around, staggering. But Van Hawk and Tori already rushed to them and in less than a minute no one was left alive!

Stepping over the bodies, Weed and his soldiers reached the far side of the hallway. There on the wall was hanged a large map of Yuroki mountains! The Dark Elves fortress there was marked by a black dot, and a bit to the east was another dot, but red.

“Vampire Lord Tori! What are you doing here?! So you succumbed to humans... to those... holy priests of Freya!”

The necromancers, clothed in dark robes couldn't hold their surprise. There were 12 of them, and each was holding a bone stave and beads, filled with dark magic.

Weed cancelled his Sculpture Transformation and stepped forward.

“Necromancers, this place will be your grave.”

While he was speaking Death Knight and Vampire Lord stood by his sides. Priests got ready to use their spells and Knights picked their targets.

The most powerful magic necromancers had was resurrection of undead. It was able to turn dead into skeletons, ghouls, zombies or even more powerful undead!

“Freya's servants... You have destroyed our work.” - bitterly said one of the necromancers.

There were no corpses nearby and the bodies of Orcs and Elves lying in the distance wouldn't be of any help against such an army anyway.

It was evident, that dark mages accepted their defeat and were ready to die without a fight.

“I see you came prepared. And came at such a wrong time. Now we won’t be able to return the loose button to its proper place...” - said one of them, bowing his head.

“Barabol!” - exclaimed other necromancers woefully.

“I never believed in divine providence, but if that’s how it must be, then kill me. I’m ready.”

The necromancer slowly stepped forward and got down on his knees in front of Weed.

“Barabol, we’re with you!”

The rest of them followed their leader and got on their knees. They were so close, that Royal Knights could behead them at any moment.

“I hope you will avoid evil in your next lives.”

Weed unsheathed his sword.

He was about to behead them and complete the quest of Order of Freya, but...

‘One moment... Something’s wrong...’

Weed thought over all the recent events. After completing that stupid quest to get the profession of Legendary Moonlight Sculptor he was always looking for a catch! And now there was something that was troubling him.

‘It seems appropriate to the difficulty level...’

The difficulty was ‘B’, like in case of Lord Tori. The quest that took all he had to finish. And to some extent it was true: to reach necromancers he had to pass their allies, Dark Elves, and that wasn’t an easy task.

‘But why do they calmly accept their deaths?!’

Weed was confused. He wanted to kill the necromancers and finish this long chain of quests a lot. As on his return he would receive even greater reward than before.

The greed flared in his eyes. Besides each of the necromancers was holding a bone staff and beads.

‘Those are at least Rare items... If sold the price will start at \$1000... And if they have additional effects... The price will go up a lot... And there’s not just one or two of them here...’

Weed swallowed. He tightened his grip on the sword and took a step towards necromancer Barabol. One strike and it will be over,

but the feeling of something lacking wasn't leaving.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

There was a sound of Orcs' footsteps above them. There wasn't much time left. Weed sheathed the sword.

"Speak, necromancer. What button was you talking about? And what you meant by divine providence?"

Regular players would hurry to finish the quest of Order of Freya, but suspicion, that something was going wrong, lodged itself too deep inside Weed.

"Weed!"

"Destroy them, that is the will of Goddess Freya!" - exclaimed priests of Freya. But they trusted their leader a lot, so they quickly calmed down

Barabol lifted his head and asked:

"You're not going to kill me, servant of Freya?"

"I'm not a servant. Answer the questions. Or should I just kill you all?"

“We... You won’t believe us anyway. Go on, Freya’s servant, strike! Even from the flames of hell I will curse you!”

“...”

The desire to cut the head of this cocky necromancer was rising again, but Weed restrained himself and said in calm voice:

“I’m giving you a chance. A chance to win my trust. If you tell the truth, I will try to believe it.”

“Really? You swear?”

“Yes. However this is just the promise to listen to you, not to let you live.”

Barabol looked at his kneeled companions, and started to tell his story.

“Since I got a chance, I’ll tell you. But you promised to believe it! The world has a wrong impression about Barr Khan Demoff. He did study necromancy and was known as a great mage, but...”

Barr Khan was a diligent young mage. A genius, recognized across the continent. And once he started to research the eternal life. He was trying to understand why people die and find a cure for terminally ill patients.

However his disciple, Shire, hated the entire world. He used his teacher's trust and with lies and dark spells he led Barr Khan into the darkness. Thus from the desire to cure all diseases and prolong lives an army of undead was born! In his madness, Barr Khan led his new army across the world, destroying entire cities. And Shire was supporting him, making deals with all the dark powers of the continent.

Many had to join him in his madness, my teacher, who died in one of the battles, was no exception. However, when Barr Khan was finally defeated and his armies dispersed across the continent, we got a chance to think over our actions.

In one of the temples of Beelzebub we found a manuscript and discovered truth about those events. And now we want to return everything to how it was supposed to be. To free Barr Khan from the dark bindings and punish Shire.

Ding!

You completed the quest 'The Rise of Dark Forces in the Plains of Despair'.

Necromancers, that you considered to be the worst of evils proved to be innocent. They do not try to take revenge on the world, but correct their past mistakes.

Reward: Receive from the High priest of Order of Freya.

Weed smiled.

‘The quest is complete! I didn’t even have to kill them.’

When he was looking for Helen’s Grail and Fargo’s Crown he had to return to the Order of Freya to complete the quest. But this time it was done right on the spot and Weed was pleased.

But in the next moment!

‘Damn!’

Weed kicked the nearby stone with all his might.

‘The items!’

If he killed the necromancers, he’d get all their items. Bone staves, magical beads and possibly something else. The items he could sell to mage players! Receiving one such set was considered a great success, and there were 12 of them!

‘Idiot! Showed some compassion and lost so much money! Why, why!? So much money...’

While Weed was immersed in his inner suffering, Barabol continued speaking:

“We came here, to the plains of Despair, and made an alliance with Dark elves to hold back Shire. Last time, when the undead army was defeated, he managed to escape. And since then he was gathering the new army of undead. Even though it’s not anywhere near the old one in numbers, it’s still a formidable force, when led by a dark wizard. Besides, fearing persecution and death, he decided to kill himself to achieve immortality. He became a Lich!”

The army of undead! Led by the one who caused the same disaster in the past, now it was here, in the Plains of Despair.

“To be able to stop him we had to beg the Dark elves for their support. And to ensure their own safety they agreed to help us. This fortress was going to be the main obstacle on the way of the new undead army. We have to unite to stop this new threat! We need your help for that.”

Ding!

New Quest: The Undead Legion of Shire.

The secret, kept from entire world! It was Shire who caused all the disasters, blamed on Barr Khan Demoff. After that famous battle he disappeared to create a new army of undead.

To survive Orcs and Dark Elves have to stop their mutual hostility and stand united against the undead army of the dark mage. Gather all the forces and repel the attacks of the immortal army of undead.

Difficulty: A.

Reward: Book of Barr Khan.

Restrictions: The Undead Legion will start the war in 30 days.

‘A’ rank difficulty! Weed completed the quest and received the next quest in the chain. The battle against the undead army! It will be the great event for the entire continent. Moreover, no one in the game has ever received the quest of such difficulty! Because there were special conditions to be met in order to be able to receive it.

While shocked Weed was thinking about it, another system message popped in front of him.

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You got an opportunity to complete a unique quest, associated with the game’s set of professions.

Corresponding to the continent’s history, no player was able to choose the profession of necromancers, as they were considered the true evil among the mages. When you defeat Shire and complete this quest, the ability to chose this profession will be unlocked.

Background: Because of the mistake of the past necromancers were being killed or banished to the darkest corners of the

continent. Because of them it was hard for them to find disciples and pass their knowledge to new generations. Once they restore their good name, they will be able to return to the kingdoms' capitals and start a new life.

The quest of 'A' rank difficulty.

And it was opening a new profession of necromancer too.

“Sir!”

Buren, Becker, Hosram, Dale and others were looking at Weed with thrilled expressions and straight backs.

Knights of justice!

It was a great honor for them to fight against the Undead Legion.

“Goddess Freya...”

Priests were reciting prayers.

Weed looked at them and said:

“I have decided...”

Book 06: Past Ties

Chapter 1: Delight

Advancing to the Plains of Despair, at the request of the church of Freya!

Join the Orcs after transformation through sculpting, and have them target the Dark Elf citadel!

During the quest to eradicate the necromancer that summoned the followers of Balkan, Weed displayed a little mercy. At the last moment, he saved the necromancer.

Perhaps due to this, an A-class difficulty quest opened up to him.

The Immortal Legion.

The Lich Shire was leading a legion of undead to war.

The Orcs and Dark Elves are needed to unite to defeat the Immortal Legion.

The necromancer watched and the royal soldiers waited for Weed's answer.

Then Weed answered.

"Orcs and Dark Elves, even with their combined strength, we will

not be able to break the immortal legion. So, I will have no part of this."

Once again, for confirmation.

'The Immortal Legion led by Shire', do you want to accept this quest?

This quest is associated with the emergence of the undisclosed profession Necromancer.

"I will not fight against the Immortal Legion."

Quest refused.

"Then...."

The look on their faces was of significant disappointment.

"Sir! We cannot accept this decision, Captain."

Becker and the usual lieutenants that followed Weed unquestionably had protested wildly. Also the Royal Army suddenly turned cold.

"This person doesn't know the meaning of justice! Have you ever learned about chivalry?"

"Help the weak and punish the wicked. Come to think of it, talk about the subject of a sculptor in the military company itself!"

Loyalty and intimacy with the soldiers of the armor dropped significantly at this point.

"No way to go along with this decision."

"For the pious Weed to think like this when facing the forces of evil... I do not believe it."

Even the priests dispatched from the Church of Freya began to avoid Weed. At this point, everyone hated Weed! However, looking back, the necromancer had spoken.

"You still do not realize the seriousness of the situation developing. I said that the Immortal Legion doesn't just involve us necromancer, but also the entire continent."

"I did not know that."

"Look, you're the only one that can lead us, so fight along with us."

T'tiring!

The Immortal Legion led by Shire to take over the world, a secret

mission!

Balkan controls this summoning from behind the scenes; he hopes to bring about the path of darkness, with his disciple Shire. A day after a battle, the Lich Shire will rebuild the legion entirely from the remains of the losses. So once again the Immortal Legion will be born!

In order to survive, the Orcs and Dark Elves will need to cooperate with each other in this war. Gather everything in your power to prevent the march of the Immortal Legion, defeat Shire.

Difficulty: A

Compensation: The magic of Balkan.

Quest time limit: Defeat the Immortal Legion within 30 days.

"....."

For a moment Weed was astonished. He rejected it, even though the quest was offered again.

He returned the cup to the Church of Freya in Heredia and was virtually forced to delve further in association with the quest for the crown. Now even the necromancer in the Plains of Despair gives him a mission where the rejection punishes his association with those near him.

‘This quest is extremely difficult!’ Weed shook his head.

"No. In this case, I just can't."

Once again, for confirmation.

'The Immortal Legion led by Shire'

Do you want to accept this quest?

This quest is associated with the emergence of the undisclosed profession Necromancer.

In the situation that you do not accept, dire consequence will occur.

"Hmm, it seems you still do not understand. Even after I told you. This mission affects all of the continents. If you ignore this, then like us, humans will not be able to escape from the darkness. Then people around you will lose courage and be distraught."

The Necromancer spoke in an utmost dismal tone.

Creepy!

Weed felt a chill sweep through his body.

Absolutely trapped in a conversation he can't get out of.

Instead of just the Church of Freya, look at yourself in a corner. No hesitation to intimidate with a fall in reputation. Here, a normal person can never succeed. Pretend to accept the quest.

It is hard to refuse the quest, but one can desert the quest later. The price of this is a continued loss of reputation, fixed on the conviction that there is no way it can be done.

But Weed was weak to this threat. Working hard for all of that fame, he couldn't just blow it all away.

"It is my desire to take on the Immortal Legion with my life. To defeat the Lich and his legion of undead, and fight to prevent the defilement of this land."

You have accepted the quest

*

Hwareureureu.

The mud and fire was swept away from the Dark Elf citadel. In order to fix the damage caused by Orc ordinances and Dark Elf magic that carved pits throughout the area.

Extremely large enough to house tens of thousands, Orcs were busy carrying luggage as they moved to the Dark Elf citadel.

"Chwichwit. Elf knows no fun, never heard of stones."

"Okay, Orc."

"I am great being first in strength. Chwiik!"

Orcs and Elves joined forces to begin the task of repairs.

The necromancer scrambled to the priests and royal knights to inform them of the undead army. Then the Dark Elves and Orcs made a dramatic reconciliation. The enemy caused a joining of races to an army.

Balkan's summoning rituals were conducted in the past, and this did not tolerate any being left alive. Dark Elves were killed and resurrected as undead hunters; Orcs were made into zombies.

Above all else, Dark Elves cherished their clans. Also the proud Orcs found it an insult to be turned into a zombie.

"Chwiik, Chwiik! We go back to the dirt. Chwichwik. We can take a break and stretch our legs after we die."

The two races allied to fight the Immortal Legion worked to repair the citadel. The priests of Freya, the royal knights also

joined the task of recovery.

"It's empty in here!"

"There is stronger support underneath."

"The foundation here is too weak."

Dale and Hosram took the soldiers with them to carefully check the citadel. The strength of Orcs was good for carrying heavy boulders or objects, but the touch of human hands was better for the structure. The eccentric Dark Elves used magic to carve and made a sloppy job of it.

From the top of the citadel, Weed was hit by a cool breeze.

A heavy and serious expression!

"Sir, the trick seems to be creating a strategy that will win the battle against the Immortal Legion."

"He's also our captain after all."

Becker gave a thumb up.

But it was in the back of Weed's mind, he wasn't considering the war coming in one month.

"Let's take a look. First, the items acquired as the spoils of war...."

He was in the middle of calculating the price of spoils from his kills during the siege of the Dark Elves. Indeed, even during the most intense of the fighting, he was looking for items. All of the important items on the floor dropped by the bodies that he relentlessly searched, laughing like a crazy person as the arrows flew towards him.

A desperate struggle for money!

Scraping up weapons and equipment like he was a vacuum cleaner.

Now it was time to calculate the worth of the items obtained.

"Identify."

Orc captain's digging glaive: Durability 69/80. Damage 25-51

The glaive of a streetwise Orc captain.

Even though it is heavy and not easy to wield, the blow can be as heavy as a hammer blow.

Restrictions:

Strength 350.

Level 180.

Effects:

+20 battle cry.

+10 Strength.

-30 Agility.

Accuracy of attack decreased by 25%.

Fatal blow has twice the effect.

The first thing he checked was an almost useless item.

'This glaive will not sell well.'

Although there may be enthusiasts that look for very unique weapons, when viewed from the perspective of efficiency, tough weapons were hardly worth brimming over. When someone does not know if it can be used in the normal game, they check what stats and skills it raises. But in Royal Road, you actually move your body.

If possible, you only use those tools that feel familiar to your hand. So the Ork glaive comes out as a difficult weapon for the buyer; normally, the effects of unusual weapons made them sell generally well. Typically they are ancillary, such as freezing the enemy with a hit or a magical attack; while increase in attack is excellent, the most sought for is a lightweight sword.

Weed decided to dispose off the rough glaive, and took a look at the other stuff.

5 Orc armor, two elf headbands, and clothing with seven penalties.

Being ordinary items, but elf clothes had resistance to spirits and raised affinity, which would be popular as an item for sale.

'That's good. For once, today's costs are achieved.'

Weed found it delightful to avoid work.

Even if you specialize in construction, no matter how good you are, you would still hate lugging stone. It is laborious work to struggle with carrying bricks in a construction ground.

Ork or Elf, the soldiers worked diligently. However, he was hiding it as it was not a wise choice to announce such things. When in the thick of things, to do this would rather severe thoughts and expressions as they looked on you.

"We have to believe in the captain."

"If it's the captain, we will win the fight against that undead army."

Due to the misunderstanding of the soldiers, Weed was being revered!

Weed stood on top of the minarets in order to see further away.

With a glance, he looked down on the Yuroki Mountains. Passing like a river beneath the clouds; resulting from layers upon layers of mountains and valleys in this space.

Meanwhile the clouds flowed by. The Dark Elves placed their stronghold at the highest point where the air is extra thin and easily exhausted.

Colder and drier areas.

Places where snow covered the mountains. The sun's glow gradually diminished as the sky turned red. But even those clouds on the bottom bathed entirely in mystical colors of the sunset.

Weed quietly watched the scene as he logged out.

*

The first thing Lee Hyun did as he left the capsule was to stop at the item auction site.

"There has to be someone looking for an Orc glaive, right? Digger Glaive won't be able to deliver much, I suppose. Elf headband prices rise only slightly because of their scarcity.... Should have picked up an elf bow, it would have sell at a high value."

In sadness Lee Hyun fell to the ground feeling regret.

The dark awareness of a gamer!

'I still have a long way to go!'

It was not necessary for him to bother with breaking the gate to win the siege. With all those buyers, he should have found a Dark Elf holding a bow even more so.

Thus if he would had picked up at least one Dark Elf lord's bow,

he would have achieved a desirable goal.

'I was too engrossed to notice.'

Lee Hyun groaned.

Yet the information of price of each item was steadily confirmed. It is an equity investment for people to verify the pricing of the items they acquire, as was checking the items for sale. Usually, these other items in the auction when finalized, is sold almost instantaneously. Lee Hyun scanned the recent postings meticulously.

Access to the Royal Road site can also help with references to newly identified items and you can find out what possible items drop from different monsters.

The road to become an emperor. The dream to rule over continents. Welcome to Royal Road.

Royal Road's homepage.

Lee Hyun was in the Hall of Fame; he clicked on the top to log in.

To get into his account, he entered his ID in the space provided.

Inconspicuous at the bottom of all the people, that is the best place!

Lee Hyun uploaded the whole video of his quest.

As an afterthought, he would have liked to edit the original video, cutting parts out to make himself look good. But for Lee Hyun, there was no separate program that he could use to edit the video.

The path of darkness.

The so-called illegal downloads of copyrighted programs were all blocked, so he would have had to purchase video editing software which required him to pay a minimum of tens of thousands of Won. Yet, even if he did, he would have had to purchase a computer to do work to that extent, so he left it as is.

"No luck, it simply rolled."

No surprise today that it died; it was making strange sounds and vibrating. As always, Lee Hyun put it on sleep mode with the movie uploaded.

*

Even today, people accessed the Royal Road Hall of Fame list. The Hall of Fame; millions of people visited the record every day; it was popular enough that it was kept at the corner of the site. Of course, most had no interest in the lower section of the Hall of Fame. It was known to the users that the ones with the high levels occupied

a higher position in the Hall of Fame.

"This is what happened in the Hermes Guild today."

"Griffith, is that guy still pirating at sea?"

In the case of murder, theft and piracy, some users also have images posted. People who live vicariously, their reckless pace also makes others feel excitement.

So what, Lee Hyun had attached two videos of himself and it just burned him? For those that are first on the Hall of Fame, there is a major difference in the value of names.

And then anyone looking at Lee Hyun's current video was completely thunderstruck.

"Oh my God!"

The reason for the surprise was the duration and size of the video.

"It's a 19 hour and 49 minute movie!"

He exited out of the absurd movie and wrote the line on the Royal Road board.

There is a new person that is in the Hall of Fame. But that man....

The new player in the Hall of Fame had uploaded new game-play footage, a whopping 19 hours!

Royal Road's board had a lot of users.

They immediately laughed at Lee Hyun.

- This noob is incredible.

- Novice has no idea how to post. Looking at the Hall of Fame, he must just be glad to be on it.

- Yet he didn't edit it at all, raises his reliability to 0.

- I'd see few than one

They only just glanced at Lee Hyun's post.

Then someone could not win against curiosity and clicked the video, but the moment he saw the beginning, he forget everything else.

"What, a mountain, where is this place.... there are countless Orcs going around."

At the first glance he did not know to look properly, although there seemed to be Dark Elves and Orcs.

"What a waste of time to click this."

But he could not resist his curiosity and looked at Lee Hyun's video again.

Nothing better to do anyway, and if there is no fun I'll turn it right off.

Then after 30 minutes. He posted back on the Royal Road board.

- That 19 hour and 49 minute video.

Just look at it.

No words can describe it.

It is one of the best.

I immediately gave it a second glance and now plan to watch it through.

People became interested from seeing this post.

They sought the video and played it.

The vast majority did not look far into it and saw no significance, thinking they got tricked into viewing it.

"Even now, fishing is popular to post about?"

"Maybe the original guy posted the remark himself. The ID can be different, a friend or family member's account."

"Well this is boring, what a bad reply..."

However, in the video uploaded by Lee Hyun, an Orc emerged.

Orc Karachwi!

He was an Orc with a very sturdy and adorned muscular body. A thick, ugly scar on the face with buck teeth popping out.

- A morning in the mountains. The red sun rising with strong wind blowing. Chwichwit. The clouds look heavy with the premonition of the upcoming battle, and I stand at the forefront of the Dark Elves. Chwi! This morning I bare fresh hope. Chwichwiwit. Our courage and ardent wish toward victory. Abandon that noble spirit. Spirits. Oh I like to sing. Chuyiik! The Dark Elves will fall even more as I sing that song. A song praying for our victory. If the song is not abandoned, our victory is certain.

The absurd Orc took their attention, people laughed at the

monologue.

"What the hell is this anyway?"

"What is this, satire?"

And people did not stop at this.

Around Orc Karachwi, the mountain was dense with fog. But the fog started to lift little by little, as the sun rose. Like that, at every point Orcs appeared.

"Orcs."

"I have lots of Orcs."

"Where is the alternative?"

- Chwiyiik! Chwiik!

- Kuwaahah!

Following the Orc's monologue, the Orc army roared!

The fog lifted completely.

The Yuroki Mountain revealed itself with nearly 400,000 Orcs and the siege of the Dark Elves began.

Against their high spirits, the Dark Elves were using elements and magic. The Orcs pushed with overwhelming numbers.

"This is like watching a movie."

"A battle of this scale..."

The majority of users have seen people do siege warfare. Magic can be dazzling when cast, but only that. That is only partly impressive.

But in this case, wave after wave of Orcs attacked as the Dark Elves desperately deflected them. Black fumes rose from the burning oil splashed down from the walls on to the Orcs. Some of the Orcs that were hit by the oil itself burned to death.

Orcs climbing the walls.

Dark Elves launching arrows covering the sky.

"Awesome."

"This is the best....!"

The people who saw the video were very much content.

Like out of a fantasy film, you can be a spectator of a desperate battle between different races.

The incredible power of that glaive left others in awe!

Powerful enough to defeat many Dark Elves in combat!

The mighty Orc that wielded the glaive in his recklessness.

Based on its overwhelming power, the entire force moved together. The explosive energy can be felt; occasionally the glaive was swung in mysterious ways leading to amazing results. Ever since the creation of virtual reality, all martial arts enjoyed its greatest prosperity. Users can move about in virtual reality without being winded and garnered more interest in the use of weapons and combat.

"How could he move like that?"

"You can see that the whole battle is drawn around him."

"I guess this is where that Orc subtly changed the flow of the battle."

The calibre of the battle completely engrossed the minds of those who watched. Even if the movie ended at that point, people were

very satisfied. But the video was far from the end. Priests and soldiers also joined those brutal looking Orcs.

"No way!"

"So that was a user?"

The people were astonished.

The war of Orcs and Dark Elves.

However, all of this was due to the will of a user. A single man was at the centre of this.

Murderous Orcs, soldiers, and priests were entering the temple, marching toward the necromancer. There was no way to know the background of the war, but the mood made it clear that the place was very important. Then the heinous Orc turned into the shape of a man.

The viewers did not know it, but the reason for this was the cancellation of the sculpture shapeshifting skill. The interior of the temple was very dark and the angle of the video showed the back, so they could not examine the face.

Then they viewed the conversation with the necromancer.

- I do not place my trust in the providence of a God for the sake of

my live. However, if this is how it will be, I am prepared to comply. Kill me.

He looked to his knees.

Then so the necromancer knelt down.

People expected that the necromancer will finally be killed.

"Kill him!"

"I am curious about this quest. Really."

"With the rewards of a quest of this scale, what is it that you want?"

People were totally immersed as they watched the video. Unlike other videos, they really felt a different experience. Hall of Fame videos were generally monster hunts. Only those that are highly acclaimed can be qualified to enter the Hall of Fame; but they also knew that their own quests can be made public to which they were not willing.

The video Weed made was a big breather of fresh air. A movie where the main character came out, and when the conflict occurred, he didn't swing the sword.

- Say, my dear necromancer. You might think of this as divine

providence, but you hit the wrong key.

- You won't kill me, slave of Freya.

- I am not a tool. I would like you to talk. Will you tell me your side of the story?

- We... are not! You will not believe my story. Get out, you servants of Freya! Go to hell, I curse you.

-

The video's protagonist fell silent for a moment and then he spoke.

- I will give you the opportunity. A chance to receive faith and trust. I will also believe what you say to be truthful.

- Really? Can you promise?

- Yes. But just that I will listen to your story. Not a promise that I won't kill you.

They saw him hesitate for a moment, and then he began his long story.

- As you told me, I will speak. What the world knows of Balkan is

wrong. You see, Balkan had been researching the skill of immortality, he was a true wizard. Yet.....

He said with an indignant look.

- Balkan's subordinate Shire used wicked tactics and the forces of darkness. Yet, the research was utilized in the wrong direction to create an immortal, undead army. When they die, the undead army quickly comes back to life! Balkan fell to the forces of darkness and lost his mind; the undead legion will destroy the world. Shire is in league with the forces of darkness and he leads the immortal legion. We necromancers were brought into this by Balkan, but fear being part of it, we are not free from our teacher's sin. The fact is, we went to this temple and got these old manuscripts to study blood and death as necromancers to reverse all of this. To return Balkan back to normal by removing the dark aura, and punish Shire, the source of all this evil.

The truth is revealed and the quest is completed. A new beginning.

Difficulty A quest has been opened.

If it has not already been unlocked, the quest is associated with the unknown profession: Necromancer.

"Necromancer!"

"If this person succeeds in this quest, we will be able to choose

necromancer as a profession?"

"An upper profession quest for wizards has appeared!"

Finally, as the Dark Elf Citadel's repair operation is shown the video ends.

*

For Lee Hyun's position, all of this took place earlier today.

Though he only slept for five hours, the world had changed considerably.

The Royal Road website had an exactly different atmosphere.

It was no longer no-one paying attention to the lower half of the Hall of Fame; the movie shook everything up.

"That Orc quest!"

"The Dark Elves, first time I've ever seen such a battle in my life."

"That Orc transformation.... might that be a quaternary polymorph wizard spell?"

"No way, if that is it, I would probably be able to use that skill."

"At the very least, I guess it could be a unique item that allows you to change the body."

People were making speculations.

The sculpture shapeshifting was entirely unknown to them and their common sense. In addition, Lee Hyun conducted this quest itself in a place that was entirely new to them. With the stretches of mountains and valleys with no limit, and the open area with clouds underneath them.

"Where is this space land!?"

"It's not the central continent..."

"Many people live in the great cities and the surrounding terrain, and they do not look like that!"

People wanted to know where Lee Hyun conducted this quest and they couldn't wait. Royal Road was modestly mobilized here. Those that excelled in various fields among them were revealed.

- First, look at the trees in the land. The weather is very cold, not hot.

- Consider the alpine region, for the breeds of trees like that....

- The mountain peak is covered with snow.
- Certainly not in the south or the north.
- How the insects or birds move. Currently, the continent of Versailles during autumn. I can judge this by the migratory birds you see flying in the video....

The study even showed the Orcs.

- I've enjoyed many fantasy novels. Orcs from a book of fantasy! Robust and simple, the race charmed me very much. Huhuhu. Till now, I was told that the study of the Orcs was ignored by all, it was very annoying. However, I still believed. Orcs are THE flower in fantasy! Think about it. If you did not have Orcs in a fantasy world, what fun would that be!

The study of Orcs did not stop there as the topic strutted around.

- The species of Orc vary slightly depending on ethnic characteristics.

Chwiik. Chwi-ik. Chwiyiik. Chuik. Chwiik.

Where they get stronger in some way, stemming from the habitats they live in.

This particular Orc study received the attention from others as

well.

- Then, I'll let you know. So far 87 species of Orcs are identified on the continent of Versailles; looking at the appearance of the Orcs in the video, it is evident that they are mainly native to the East.

Orcs of the Kingdom of Brent put out a similar twang sound.

However, soon the words of the Orc studies received objections.

- Not the Orcs you see with those weapons and vitality. Orcs of the Kingdom of Brent are just about level 140. Many of the Orcs shown in the video are beyond level 200.

- I do not know too much about Orcs, however, the level is over 350. I've hunted many monsters. The Orcs that came out there, I've never seen guys that strong. To fight hordes of Orcs like that has got to be dreadful.

- This is giving me goosebumps!

An Orc researcher wrote this a while back

- I'm confident that this Orc species is not from the Kingdom of Brent. Though perhaps we can gather that the Orcs of the Kingdom of Brent are a little related. With that heinous crime of a movie coming out, I hardly have any knowledge of where that type of Orc may be found. Looking at it, my impression and interest is

lost. My taste in it has also fallen sharply.

After the announcement of the assumed region of these Orcs that appeared in the video were made, things became more active.

But for Lee Hyun, it was completely different. Turning on the computer, the Hall of Fame website report left Lee Hyun disappointed.

"The total number of hits is less than 70,000."

Other videos in the Hall of Fame get millions of hits. Of the Hermes Guild, Ray Bard's movies get more than 100 million. Especially for the Champion's Tower video, Ray Bard's authorized scene boasted a whopping 1.7 billion hits.

"70,000 and nothing else."

Lee Hyun was discouraged, but if you actually know about the Hall of Fame, you would not agree with that.

The movie was posted just five hours before.

Also, it was located at the bottom of the Hall of Fame, and the length was too long to see in this amount of time; no one will see it whole for a while. The rumour started three hours before it began to climb. Since then, thousands of people had access.

The important part is that because the movie is long, to properly watch the full length of the video, the view counts will not easily increase. However, after the word spread, more and more will be coming back. As for how much the view count will increase, nobody knew the ripple effect that would come from this.

Chapter 2: Lavias, City In The Sky

In one of the many hidden dungeons, a person appeared. She found herself in a dark dungeon, and looked around in confusion. However, she soon regained her senses.

"Light! Work fast."

Light was called to quickly burn through the darkness; she casted the spell to be able to walk around.

She originally wanted to be a wizard, but also wanted to wield a sword. Although the weapon is of a short sword variety, it has a fierce stab attack. She carried a bow on her shoulder, and she had the look of a priestess. Where she could not use physical attacks, she used spells and buffs. Her class was well rounded.

Her identity is a shaman.

Dyne! She was seriously ill and had to leave in order to receive surgery. Now she has returned.

"This hasn't changed."

Dyne's eyes lit up.

As luck would have it, the time has come to move forward with

her head held up high.

"Miss, I need to ask you something."

The one who spoke those words was a Dullahan. (a headless monster, like from v2ch16)

It would have been frightening, but to Dyne, it was a familiar sight.

"Then tell me!"

"I've been looking for a head, my head. If you see it, show me where it is."

The creature of terror was holding the head he was looking for!

Dyne decided to give him an answer.

"Then close your mouth."

"What did you say?"

"I give up!"

Dyne suddenly clenched her two fists and relentlessly beat the Dullahan's head.

In the past, she hated hunting undead. After she safely returned from the surgery, the Dullahan was only a monster. Although punching with fists was not the only learned skill, her archery was also quite excellent.

She also could do different buffs, and she learned curse and attack spells.

Even her swordsmanship was at a high level!

The one thing that was difficult for Dyne, was that her class couldn't exhibit as much power as the original class, since Dyne is a Shaman. The class is well-rounded in all talents, but is unable to specialize; though, it seems highly effective in combat.

Well, the origin of her current state of mind should also be considered. The beginning of all of this was in this place, with the character named Weed. Dyne started with punching and kicking, and followed up with fencing. She was excited using it on the Dullahan.

"My head, my head! My head hurts too much."

"It was a little bit stressful being confined in a hospital.... please understand. It won't last much longer. Blood curse!"

Yet the blood curse she used was of a certain family of spells.

The monster, Dullahan, was blessed with the curse of darkness!

He was beaten up and then his life was restored to an even higher amount than before.

Plagues and horrible enchantments.

Rather, it was not to kill him. Buffs to save the Dullahan and then hit the him, it was contradictory. At the end of a long time of beating up the Dullahan, she finished him off with arrows.

Exerting her skills after such a long time!

Punching or fencing, archery, and magic, it was still the same.

The pitiful Dullahan became the target of all this.

"I'm not too rusty with my skills."

Dyne smiled joyfully.

When she played Royal Road in the past, she cared only about raising her skills rather than levels. Buff the monster, fight it, and repeat. Her level of skills increased abnormally.

"It's good to see Dullahans, and skeleton dogs!"

Dyne walked alone, strolling through the dungeon of the undead. Yet her body moved by its own accord. Coming back to Royal Road after a long time, she revelled in its ambiance, as if drunk from breathing the air.

How much she missed while she was bedridden.

Just a single breath, even wanting it as if it was a meal.

How wondrously beautiful life is, only a person who was sick could see this. Yet, whenever a monster was caught in her line of sight, she beat them right away.

Skeleton warriors, skeleton knights.

Just before the surgery, the skeletons emerged. It was a high-risk surgery. There are many cases where the patient dies in the middle of the operation. People worried that 'If there were only bone left after death, it could look like this case'.

She wandered around the undead dungeon just to look at it!

In her memory the area was simply barren, but it's not the same.

It used to be decorated with gray and black stalactites, hanging in the natural cave or shattered.

But statues had been chiseled everywhere.

You have seen the great Nameless Sculptures of Lavias. These great nameless sculptures had arisen!

These sculptures of treasured memories have become sanctuaries and guides in these dangerous dungeons. The mysterious statues were made by an anonymous sculptor.

Effect: The calm aura around these sculptures will increase a player's vitality and mana by 25%, movement speed by 10%. Monsters' attacks have a 5% penalty. The effects do not stack.

"Statue?"

Dyne was in a bad mood from the sculptures that did not fit her memory of the place.

"Why is everything like this?"

The moment she was about to turn away, the statues' appearance felt suddenly familiar.

One eyebrow slightly cocked upwards with a fierce expression on the man's face!

And the woman certainly resembled Dyne.

"It can't be..."

Dyne looked at the man. It was no doubt the man she met just before her surgery.

In Royal Road, the person who was deeply carved into her heart at the very end.

At that time, Dyne and this person made a fantastic party. The various specialties of the Shaman, combined with Weed's strength swept through the undead dungeon.

"Oh Weed."

Tears flowed uncontrollably in Dyne's eyes.

"Sob. I promised to never cry again, but..."

Before undergoing the operation, she imagined it a hundred times.

She will seek a new life, being glad to be alive.

She would never cry.

But now shedding these tears, how she felt was indescribable.

As she left to take the surgery, she thought that no one would

remember her. Just to become completely forgotten from existence; she did not even know whether there was anyone who thought of her.

However, there was one person who gave her this as remembrance.

There was a man who crafted her appearance into sculptures. She could feel her heartbeat. Her heart started beating rapidly, her hands trembled slightly. Dyne's whole body was wracked with emotion, and then she noticed that graffiti was written under the statues. The handwriting was so poor; it appeared to have been written by a child.

Geomchi. Punishment to the ignorant!

Geomdulchi. Men everywhere should do hard work.

Geomsamchi has been here.

Geomsachi. I serve the master; it brings glory to my life.

Geomohchi. Must obtain a girlfriend. We're still only in our late 30s.

.....

Geombaekgusipsachi. I'm hungry. Someone lend me a little bit of

barley bread.

.....

Geomsambaekyisipilchi. I starved to death yesterday.

Geomsambaekyisipyichi. These little monsters; and no food.

.....

Geomsambaeksasipohchi. Lover wanted. No conditions required.
Only that you are willing to learn how to cook.

.....

Geomohbaekochi. Hello, nice to meet you.
Geomohbaekohchiipnida is my name. Also known as the youngest
cutie, Hajiyo. Hahaha.

Dyne went around a one large tour of the undead dungeon, and
then she froze.

It had been a long time since her battle with the skeleton
Dullahan and his head; she sought Weed's anonymous creations.
Where Dyne and Weed ate their meal, without fail two sculptures
of themselves rested there.

“Amazing. These statues...”

Dyne's eyes were moistened with tears. It may be trivial, but it was enough for her heart to be pained from the emotions. She viewed many sculptures like this. Slowly she continued to walk around the damp dungeon in enjoyment.

“Khu khu khu. Human beings are not allowed in this place.”

“In this place, you lay your body down before the lions. In this place of rest.”

“Lay down your life. I will guide you to your eternal rest.”

Three Skeletons!

Occasionally, monsters that haunted the area caught up to her and were firmly beaten.

This was absolutely not acceptable. She shattered their bones in rage for committing the crime of destroying the mood. They only did this to defend their territory, while Dyne intentionally walked around them!

These statues were intimately made with the desire to not allow them to gather near these statues, but without fail, Dyne was interrupted by the monsters. All she could do was let her skills go rampant as she hunted these monsters down. The characteristics of the Shaman appeared as she attacked and defeated these

monsters.

She was out of the dungeon within two days.

*

“So this is the city in the sky?”

“Yes. This place was recently discovered a short time ago by some adventurers. The only thing is that only people who did a meritorious service requested by Baran village could come up here.”

In Laviyas, there were quite a lot of adventurers. Dyne did not look around without Weed; in the meantime, many users did some discoveries and adventures on their own.

The sky above the city.

The scenery of the clouds passing by from the flow of the wind left the tourists with a good feeling, making the place a sight to behold. Low-level tourists came here risking their lives just for the chance to visit.

Laviyas became famous, and even the kingdoms' nobility officially announced their interest to visit. Rosenheim Kingdom's nobles, and the nobles of the Kingdom of Brent often drop by quite often. Extremely expensive quests arose for hiring escorts for them to go there safely.

“There are a lot of people here.”

Dyne slowly walked inside the city. Then a wide variety of bird tribes greeted her.

“Caw, caw. This is the first time seeing you. Are you new in town?”

The one who spoke up was Tom Ball, the new grandfather.

Beside him were many other bird tribes. The crow flapped his wings.

“Human, are you strong? You seem to be quite famous; I would like to ask you a favor. Up here in Levias, we have been unlucky with all of the undead.”

“Do you know how to gather herbs? If you don't, I'll teach you about herbal medicine; can you give me 200 gold? There is a herb I'm looking for in the north corner of a cave. If you try to dig up its roots, you could get injured, so you have to be careful.”

They were prospects.

She met a wide variety of bird tribes, but they all couldn't remember her. Even if they had a new head of the family, they were severely forgetful. Even though Dyne helped the black crow

tribe, she had been forgotten.

As she leisurely wandered around, Dyne suddenly missed Weed.

‘He must be somewhere in the middle of an adventure and all. He must be at a much higher level, why, wouldn't he?’

She wanted to get in touch with him.

She wanted to share her joy with him in being alive!

However, there was no way to contact him. Before she left for the surgery, she deliberately disabled her friends' list. If she came back, there was no way he would be aware of the fact. She was extremely regretful of rejecting his friend request.

Thousands of people with a similar name would pop up if you didn't register the friendship immediately with a direct contact. So this means that there is no way to keep in touch.

‘Well, that's okay, if we are meant to meet again, then it will happen. Though, if we did, would it be a sad meeting?’

The level difference must have grown too large, and they may not have a chance of meeting one another. However, this was not a big concern. With her high level of skill in comparison to her actual level, she can easily build it back up.

‘I'm free now to be myself. I don't have to worry about dying. I've got time.’

Dyne then stood alone watching as several women approached her.

“How do you do? I have a problem I would like your help with. Would you mind taking this risk? My name is Geurati, the wind spirit witch.”

Dyne happily nodded her head.

Adventure!

Hunting!

She wanted to venture forth and get stronger.

'The continent of Versailles, Levias, any place with monsters is good.'

*

The levels of the Geomchis failed to rise quickly. The reason was due to the building of the pyramids.

“Kkeungcha!”

“Three hundred and four, just a little bit more. Let’s show them our strength.”

“Yes, sir. To the death!”

The hard work of pushing the pyramids’ stones was entrusted to them.

Selena, a pretty girl from the flower shop in the countryside nearby came by and made a request.

“Actually, my house is falling apart right now and needs a lot of repair, can you please help me?”

T'tiring!

Selena's house. In Serraburg, there is a shabby house in disrepair. If you can rebuild Selina's home, you can be her friend.

Difficulty: D

Reward: Selena's friendship.

Quest requirement: A certain level of fame. Must have experience in construction.

Originally, this was not a common quest. The reward was simply just friendship with Selena!

When you start in Royal Road, you cannot leave the castle for the first 4 weeks. You have to master how to play, and to some extent, you have to pick and choose the quests in accordance to the rewards. Whether it be a lot of money, experience, or payment of an item!

A request to move things with your body in many ways; nevertheless architectural based quests is not that hard.

However, as the Geomchis listened to Selena, they rushed for it recklessly.

“Please, please allow me!”

“Accept me as if I was your slave!”

“A home? I'll build you a palace!”

The beauty of Selena caused them to rush and they were all clamoring to receive the quest. It was too late for Geomsamchi (3rd) and Geomdulchi (2nd). They were shouldering the various tools for building the house.

Teachers or practitioners, the desperate struggle for love was the same.

In fact, as many as 500 workers were mobilized to build the house for the girl from the flower shop. Enough people to build a house within a day or two.

The Geomchis were already familiar with the building of a pyramid! They had worked on many things; a flower shop should be a piece of cake.

However, the building of Selenas house by the Geomchis went very slowly.

“Here, have something to drink.”

“Hahaha! Thank you.”

“What to do, this sort of thing.....”

Every time Selenas would say or do anything, the Geomchis were in a frantic to just to see or talk to her. In her absence, they deliberately slowed their work until she appeared again. They only pretended to work hard.

It had been about 10 days that they were building the flower shop. Even as it went closer to completion, they found more ways to avoid work.

Geomilbaekohchi sank into a deeply sad expression.

Geomsamchi (3rd) approached him.

“What's wrong?”

“Oh, master Geomsamchi! To be honest... the store is nearly complete, we won't see Selena as much, will we?”

“Well that would be bittersweet, wouldn't it?”

“Yes, I know. Selena is not really a human being.... but I like her. She is very nice and has a beautiful smile too. She doesn't ask for much. I wish this could last for at least one more week.”

Geomilbaekochi lamented saying farewell to Selena.

Then assistant master Geomsamchi broke into a laugh.

“Fool! This is what we will do.”

Geomsamchi violently brandished his sword and threw it into the flower shop's wall and demolished it.

Then they clapped as the Geomchis gathered in the disturbance.

“That's our master for you.”

“This is the best!”

“That was an excellent idea!”

They heard the echoes of the crash as the flower shop that the Geomchis worked hard to build was broken. However, in front of Selena, the nearly completed store was ultimately destroyed.

The nice little flower shop that the Geomchis built, they wept sadly.

“Boo-hoo.”

“Selena can't live in a place like this anymore.”

“In my youth, 12 people beat me up and not a single tear fell from me, but this.”

But this was not the end.

After Selena's flower shop, in the Serraburg province, since then many requests had been made for building several houses and shops.

The Geomchis' criteria for selecting these jobs were simple. The body or face of a pretty woman was all that was needed.

“No reward needed, my friend!”

“I'll work till I collapse just to see here smile.”

“Hijuk, she smiled at me!”

At the construction ground, the Geomchis worked hard in building up the bricks. Solely to see girls, they worked hard to build a house, a noble intention. In the Serraburg castle many tanned laborers with their shirts off could be seen.

From building the pyramid, it's hard to calculate the massive amounts of stone used.

T'tiring.

In regards to the repetitive actions, the architect skills bricklaying and landscaping have been acquired.

Bricklaying 1 (0%) : Bricks can be stacked neatly to build homes.

With this skill, no matter how many bricks are stacked, it can be done neatly.

Shovel 1 (0%): The ground can be dug up quickly.

Architectural skills!

It is fairly difficult class to categorize, even as a manufacturing job; as for the previous , it was not a class released so far.

Weed's exceptional dexterity brought about his skilfulness in cooking; as the Geomchis labored through construction, their extreme efforts caused them to learn architect skills. Bricklaying and spade, but another that raised was the great increase in the strength stat. In order to raise the architecture skill, the Geomchis had to complete requests by shoveling the ground and piling up bricks.

As a result, within three months the Geomchis got to know all the beauties of Rosenheim Kingdom and moved along. Since then, it was hard pressed for a Geomchi to walk the streets.

“Hello brother number 110!”

“Thank you so much for the last house you built us, brother Geomsipohchi!”

The people that visited could not believe the Geomchis.

Only a Geomchi can do such work!

After a few months, the Geomchis became very popular for eagerly building houses for beautiful residents of Rosenheim Kingdom.

From then on, each of the nobles came.

“I have heard of your fame. It is said that you are quite famous in this field. I would like a mansion built. This won’t be a simple house, but something far more grand that I will pay well for if you accept.”

Build a noble's mansion for Baron AriasNear the capital of Rosenheim kingdom, Baron Arias owns a fairly big town. Because of the large influx of markets and goods, he gained a lot of money and can now have a proper residence built.

“I refuse.”

Quest has been refused.

For some time, the Geomhis refused quests without even looking.

“What are we, your servants?”

“That is just too much extra work to do!”

“No matter how much you want to offer, I'm still not interested.”

The Geomchis watched as the overweight Baron Arias glared at them with an expression of ridicule. However, when they were asked by another pretty woman from the town, without thinking they nodded.

“No problem, I accept!”

“I will do the best that I can to help build it for you.”

The Geomchis worked fervently hard. Yet, they even practiced their skills, and they spent their spare time hunting and visiting dungeons. Then all the Geomchis exceeded level 220.

“Status window!”

Character Name: Geomchi505.

Preference: None

Level: 220

Profession: Martial artist

Title: None

Fame: 1632

HP: 27060

Mana: 4402

Strength: 850

Agility: 455

Health: 230

Wisdom: 65

Intelligence: 40

Fighting Spirit: 130

Stamina: 120

Endurance: 180

Charm: 20

Charisma: 60

Leadership: 30

Luck: 5

Faith: 10

Attack: 1340

Defense: 195

Magic Resistance:

Fire: 20%

Water: 20%

Earth: 20%

Black magic: 20%

Then a nameless challenger came before Geomchi.

A drifter wearing light armor and with a cape!

Geomchi was intrigued. Then the wanderer said:

“Little by little you perfect your martial arts. You and your colleagues, I have heard of your reputation. You live to serve women? I have dedicated my entire life into sharpening my martial arts.”

The drifter appeared to have the exact same class as the Geomchis' characters. A martial artist.

Then the wanderer spoke again.

“Do you know what it means to be stronger? Geom, it is not enough to just hone your skills. Experience the broad world around you, come back and defeat me. Then I will guide you to true strength.”

T'tiring!

Become a warrior. The world is cluttered with monsters to hunt, you need to find them.

Young women and ladies look for those that are chivalrous, it is attainable in this land.

It is said that if you travel through the continent of Versailles and return, you can be reborn as a true martial artist.

Difficulty: High tier class advancement quest.

Reward: The possibility to attain more skills.

Restrictions: Quest limited to the Martial artist class. Must not be infamous.

Once the wanderer left, Geomchi and the rest down to Geomchi505 came together in formation.

The time has come and Geomchi had to make a decision.

“All right everyone. So far we have stuck together in Royal Road as a united group.”

“.....”

The Geomchis' expressions were completely serious!

Without allowing any distractions, they listened to the words of their master.

“When we are united, we are fearsome. Frightening enough that we were avoided. We are strong even on our own.”

When Geomchi hunted in a dungeon, the majority of users insulted him and departed.

To monopolize the monsters, and take the glances of beautiful female users! In order to eat a meal without burning it when cooking, and eat delicious rice without fighting over it! No matter how crowded a place might be, even then he can find in a moment a secluded hunting ground!

“Now it is time for us to experience the wider world. Each of us must go our separate ways throughout the continent, defeating strong monsters. In six months time, let us meet again in Rosenheim kingdom.”

“Understood. Teacher!”

“I will see you later.”

“Please be healthy. Master!”

The Geomchis made their respective farewells and walked away.

A small backpack that contained only barley bread was all as their luggage. In fact, they did not leave anything behind.

The Geomchis scattered throughout the entire continent! Although the separation of master and disciples was bittersweet, the disciples left with their heads held high, and their faces filled with mirth.

‘Finally it's time to eat heartily.’

‘I will seriously die from hunger.’

‘Now to hunt a rabbit and roast it.’

To become true warriors, the Geomchis separated and departed from Rosenheim Kingdom.

A typical occasion at the University of South Korea!

Professional gamers typically have little expectation for an application to be accepted. But if it actually came to acceptance, their troubles only become greater.

“Older brother, honestly I have something to tell you....”

Lee Hayan was in conflict as she held the letter of acceptance. Today was the day of the interview at the University of Korea. However, Lee Hyun had to be present at the college interview.

“I can't hold it off any longer, got to do it....”

After agonizing for a long time, Lee Hayan eventually let it all out.

How challenging!

Hayan looked at Lee Hyun as she slammed the door.

“Brother, there is something I have to say. You have to go to University of Korea for the interview.”

When Hayan spoke, Lee Hyun was in the middle of looking at the Hall of Fame page.

“Interview? What interview?”

“I mean the interview for University enrolment.”

“What? Really?”

Lee Hyun jumped in surprise.

All of a sudden, an interview at the National University of South Korea!

Lee Hayan bowed her head and sulkily said.

“The thing is... I actually turned in the application form. It is mandatory that you have to get to the college on time... There are many people trying to enter nowadays.”

Lee Hyun had heard too often of these university admissions. There are often more applicants than there are spots to be filled.

Lee Hyun nervously asked.

“So what did you do?”

“I sent in an application form rather than toss it away. You were so busy that I did it without your permission. I'm sorry, brother.”

As Hayan apologized, Lee Hyun was extremely angry, but he could still tolerate it. He could not scold her for acting on her own. Though, he did snatch it out of Lee Hayan's hand.

“For this document and the interview, it means it passed, right?”

“Yeah. These documents typically mean that it passed, but it does not mean unconditional acceptance; but, it does show that it is likely....”

“Great!”

Lee Hyun smiled brightly.

All of his hardships so far, he felt a burden lift from him. He was happy.

He misunderstood the difference in his stance in life.

Lee Hayan's words!

Of all the universities in South Korea, he couldn't imagine the thought of going to an admission interview. After dropping out of high school, he barely took the GED. He did not even think that he could ever go to college in the first place.

Of course the truth was, University of South Korea had accepted Lee Hayan with a scholarship.

“That's great. So when is the interview?”

For some reason, Lee Hayan became a little uneasy. It was different from an expected response.

“Yes, but you're probably going to be angry...”

Lee Hayan was hesitant as she spoke.

“Today.”

“Huh?”

“You need to go see the interview. There are only three hours left.”

“Are you serious?”

Lee Hyun's spirit flared.

An interview at his sister's university, right at that moment he turned off the computer and stood up.

“Then let's get ready. I'll do it.”

*

The virtual reality department of the University of South Korea.

Lee Hyun lavishly arrived in a taxi at the University of South Korea. It would be unthinkable on a normal day.

‘Ah, Hayan, he has been very interested in virtual reality.’

This detail of his interest in advancing his education was something he never told her.

‘Perhaps virtual reality can be useful, since it is so familiar to him.’

Lee Hyun was completely delighted as he waited for the interview.

“It's fine. Everything will go well.”

Said his sister as she tightly held on to his hand. At this moment, Lee Hyun noticed a rough change in her.

‘This is a misunderstanding’

This was no time for such a confession.

‘Older brother, this issue will have to be put on hold.’

Lee Hayan was at once quiet. Already the wheel was rolling. The time has come, and at this point there is no chance to return back home. All of a sudden, cold sweat appeared on Lee Hayan's forehead. Wishing fervently that she could do this at a later time.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes brother, I'm fine.”

“You are sweating a lot.”

“I think it's from the tension.”

“Tell me if by chance you get sick.”

From this reluctant deceit about sweat due to tension, Lee Hyun was genuinely concerned. Lee Hayan's clever eyes beamed.

‘Ah! This is it.’

Just 3 minutes left until the time of the interview, Lee Hayan placed both her hands on her belly.

“Older brother.”

“What, what's wrong?”

“It's a stomach ache. I need to go to the restroom. Might be what I ate this morning.”

“That's....”

This was not the time.

At such an important moment for his little sister, Lee Hyun wanted to stop her.

“Can you withstand it?”

“Aw, it would be better to not show something impolite during the interview.”

“Well, if that's the case.... then get back quickly.”

“Yes, older brother.”

“Do not be late for the interview.”

“I'll be back soon.”

Lee Hayan secretly slipped away by pretending to go to the bathroom. Oblivious, Lee Hyun waited anxiously for his sister to return. He got up from the chair and began pacing in the corridor as he looked at the clock.

1 minute. 2 minutes....

Minding the time, he wanted a way to completely stop it, even though such a thing was impossible.

‘This can hamper Hayan's future... Of all things, an upset stomach, I'm responsible. Something must have be strange with the rice I served earlier.’

His fingers were trembling slightly from the suspense. Lee Hayan did not appear from the restroom in the 3 minutes approaching the interview with the professors. The female assistant came over and said:

“The person who came for the interview? The professors are waiting.”

“I'm sorry, my sister has yet to return, is it possible that you can wait a few minutes?”

Being denied for coming late to an interview is certainly the worst.

As Lee Hyun spoke to her, face to face, the impression he made to the assistant teacher made her heart tremble.

Strong eyes!

If she did not wait, she felt that he could turn this whole place upside down.

“Oh, I see. I will convey this with the professor.”

After answering, the TA was equally puzzled.

‘Sister what are you waiting for? Except for the interview, parties would not enter-....’

After 10 minutes passed, Lee Hayan still did not appear. At that time she had covertly met with the TA.

“I have a request for you. Tell my older brother that you met me at the restroom and due to the stomach ache I will absolutely not be back in time. Can you tell him to go to the interview instead?”

“Yes?”

“Please, tell him that. Have my brother go to the interview.”

The assistant teacher thought that this pair of siblings was really

strange.

Waiting for his sister before he goes to the interview, she could not understand Lee Hyun; then his sister, asking me to tell him instead is absolutely strange.

Anyways, the professors were waiting in the interview room.

“Will you tell him?”

“Yes, I accept.”

The assistant went to Lee Hyun and spoke.

“For now, go to the interview room first.”

“My sister is not back....”

“I met your sister in the bathroom, and she said that she is not likely to make it and that she wants you to meet the professors. They cannot be delayed anymore, or it will be cancelled.”

“This shouldn't have happened. I will go to the interview.”

The assistant teacher of English did not understand, but the interview was permitted.

“Follow me.”

Eventually Lee Hyun went alone to the meeting, without his sister.

*

Five professors were looking at documents.

‘I guess that must be my little sister's application.’

The fact was that the application actually was of Lee Hyun's.

As the professor was reading this application, he asked a question before Lee Hyun could try to speak.

“What motive did you have to choose this school?”

“I thought that this renowned school would give a promising future.”

“Are you indicating that other schools are not good prospects?”

The professor questioned him obstinately. Lee Hyun paired him with a simple answer.

“Not at all; however, I have heard that surely it has the best

facilities and faculty.”

“I see.”

The professors nodded their heads to the textbook answer.

'Unnecessarily loud, but not bad.'

'Emphasis on doing the basics.'

'Sincere attitude in the interview by bargaining. Though he was late in the interview...'

Lee Hyun blurted out.

“In fact, my sister is a really good kid.”

“Hrm?”

“When my sister was a child, my parents died.”

Lee Hyun began to speak at length of his family history. For the sake of Lee Hayan's interview, of course he had to give his sister's story as much as possible. The fact that this choice of Korea University was not for his sister but for Lee Hyun personally, was completely hidden from him.

'The University of Korea! I absolutely must not fail. I'm talking about the future of my sister here.'

So in order to buy time until his sister arrived to the meeting, he spoke of their story of suffering from the beginning of their youth. He told them of how his family lived and how he and his sister grew up in such a way. However, to talk about his sister, he could not do so without giving his own back story.

Unsafe from the threat of loan sharks. How he fought to somehow protect his family, earn money at the gas station and other work he was not supposed to do. The professors listened to Lee Hyun in silence. The interview was longer and more different than usual. The format is normally the professor throws out a question and the candidate answers back. But now Lee Hyun spoke of how he lived in his rambling story, as the faculty heard it.

“... And now, I went through the process of preparing for a year to the extent of laying out the ground work for Royal Road. In the case of other games that come out, it is varied in interest. But with the virtual reality of Royal Road, it is different at its core. Breathing, moving, behavior and actions that make a lot of memories. I see that such a game would last at least 10 years. I'm not collecting enough money yet for the college tuition of my younger sister, but I will not be late for the payment date.”

At this point, the professors realized that something is wrong with Lee Hyun's understanding of the situation.

‘This is a ridiculous misunderstanding; he thinks the interview is for his younger sister and not for him. ‘

Yet, the professors did not talk about this; instead they extraordinarily asked a question.

“Then what about virtual reality? This may be a childish question, however, how can you divide virtual reality and reality?”

Lee Hyun's answer was simple.

“To try divide reality and virtual reality in itself is meaningless.”

“Oh, really? Tell us why you think so.”

To the professor, at most the world of reality and virtual are separate, or the other expected answer is that a complete virtual reality is a creation of a dream. Lee Hyun's unique answer was interesting.

“Standing here now or being in Royal Road, in both reality is the same”

“Virtual reality and reality is the same, what do you mean by that?”

“An example. Living fiercely, work and go about creating things and achieve things therein that will benefit me. As for virtual reality, is it not fact that life becomes an imitation. You can gain knowledge, can earn money. To endeavor wherever, it has not

been different to me in anyway.”

“I understand perfectly. This student Hayan, it appears we now know enough of this kind of person. We will notify you soon of the result.”

“I am grateful.”

Lee Hyun left and afterwards the professors commenced into a meeting.

“Such strong vitality.”

“To think of such an uncommon family like that in this day and age, it stands to reason that it could.”

“With the advancement of virtual reality, the meaning of family is fading, and he has a great mentality.”

“A wide range in knowledge about the side of virtual reality.”

“A variety of life experiences, it would be helpful to many.”

The professors talked at length, not one of them was looking negatively on Lee Hyun.

“Then we are all in agreement.”

The professors stamped the seal which passed the application of Lee Hyun.

“Phew, barely made it out to the ending.”

Lee Hyun barely made it through the interview. Come to think of it, he was not sure what kind of answer, if anything, surfaced.

“Well, that's all that can be done...”

Lee Hyun found his sister.

The little bird came out from the bathroom and was sitting on the bench as she breathed out a sigh of relief. His little sister was saying prayers. As Lee Hyun neared, she looked up.

“How'd it go, the interview?”

“Huh? Yeah....”

Lee Hyun did not know how to comfort his sister. Of all things, to become sick at such a time.

“In my own way, I tried to explain.... Now to get you in, I tried to speak of our situation in the interview.”

“What situation.”

“The person concerned must be in the interview. I'm not that skilled at expressing myself and I don't know the outcome.”

Lee Hayan was puzzled.

She thought he would feel angry at the fact he was deceived, but he was more regretful about the interview.

'It can't be that you still don't know? How is that possible?'

Lee Hayan decided to go with a general statement first.

“It's okay brother. Believe that it went well, and nothing more can be done for the interview anymore.”

“Yes, I could, but.... yeah. It has already passed. I was foolish of have let it.”

Back home, as they exited through the gate of the university, Lee Hayan momentarily flinched.

“What is it?”

“I left something here! Wait here just a moment, brother.”

“Okay.”

Lee Hayan got back in the school to meet the assistant teacher. She had the mailing address changed to where the grandmother was hospitalized.

Chapter 3: First Time At The Movies

Initially, Lee Hyun was going to go home with his sister. As per usual, the decision was to go home and do a few things at the house and get to Royal Road. The time for the quest was just around the corner, but the lack of time for preparation made it worse. However, this was not what came to mind.

'The University of Korea interview! An incline over an incline. It is not credible to spend such an important day in this way.'

Lee Hyun took heart and looked into his wallet. (perhaps closer to withheld breath, or preparing himself)

Stiff blue bills.

If only they knew what happens to cash after the generous cash withdrawals. (might be he's contemplating the waste of overspending)

“Hayan.”

“Huh?”

“Let's see a movie.”

Until now, there has never been a time Lee Hyun went to a movie

theatre. But there is a first time for everything.

“Really?”

To Hayan, this was unfathomable.

Her brother of all people! A stingy person who would never waste money or even use it to ride a bus. A guy who wouldn't buy junk or even essential school supplies at the very least. And to go to a movie theatre.

“Yeah. Seeing a movie would be fun.”

With Lee Hyun's strong determination, the two headed to the movie theatre.

A multiplex theatre with many movies.

Associated with a large shopping mall, a place where visitors were unending.

As he entered the theatre, he was continuously amazed.

“Amazing.”

How could such a place be there that will gather so many people. This just seemed to be something from a different world.

“Look brother, this movie looks really interesting.”

“Sure. Come, let's go and take a look.”

In truth, this was the first time for Lee Hayan to see a movie as well. Even though she got a fairly considerate allowance, and would earn her own money, she would never spend it carelessly. It was a first time for her to go to a high standard theatre to see a film.

“So many films.”

“Which are the more recent in popularity?”

“ Thereare posters all over.” (would prefer 'A good man's end'. But this is direct...)

“Let's go, it sounds like fun.”

Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan bought tickets after waiting for some time in line. Initially, he only knew that you had to pay money before entering the theatre; however, he also had to purchase a ticket specifically at the box office.

“So this is how it works. I knew this would happen. This is normal.”

Lee Hyun had a sudden overwhelming smile. A confident smile. Yet he handed 10,000 Won Won grandly for these two tickets.

“Two tickets for ”

Pride from coming to a movie theatre!

Satisfaction of being a cultured man!

Having begun this moment, it was worth every bit. Though it is precious, spending the money is still worthwhile.

Smiling sweetly, the employee said.

“3:30 show for 2 Adult tickets. Correct?”

“Yes.”

“Do you have a discount card or a credit card?” (discount might mean debit)

“Huh?”

Lee Hyun was baffled.

Credit card and discount card!

A quite significant sounding name, the mention of those words.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Oh. Yes. MK capital, or carrier card, credit cards, or choose a discount.”

“Then, if that's the case, how much of a discount...”

Lee Hyun asked hesitatingly.

The staff member laughed heartily. It was a smile bright enough to pick up your spirits.

“2,000 Won per person.”

“.....”

At that time, Lee Hyun exposed his rotten smile!

7,000 Won movie tickets for 2,000 Won; a discount that cannot be ignored.

For 2,000 Won per person, a total discount of 4,000 Won!

But there was no card for Lee Hyun.

Credit cards were mainly used for the wholesale market, and he was without one since he did not fit the requirements to be issued with a credit card.

The debt was paid off, but his record remained, and no credit means no card issued.

Not even a cell phone.

“Hayan.”

He looked to his sister for help, but her head was shaking; it was the same for her.

A highschooler without a cell phone, or a card.

Eventually, Lee Hayan grabbed Lee Hyun's arm to get his attention.

“Brother. It's just a movie, we don't have to watch.”

At that moment, Lee Hyun was certain that he wanted to see the movie.

Looking back, he did not remember his family ever watching a

movie together.

'As the older brother, I live for the sake of my younger sibling, Lee Hayan.'

Feeling remorse, he handed over 20,000 Won without hesitation to the staff.

A grand move!

“ without discount or credit, I want 2 tickets.”

“Hope you find a good spot, sir.”

The theatre staff found it interesting as the two siblings went to find good seats during the time remaining. For a 3:30 pm showing, there was still 1 hour and 20 minutes left. Lee Hyun attended his sister as they went inside the movie theatre. There is a comprehensive game room and a place where you can buy popcorn and squid.

'That squid is almost half the price of the film. Popcorn is so expensive.'

This place, there is no sense to it.

The selling price of popcorn and coke in the movie theatre is more expensive than the price of the ticket!

Lee Hyun looked around and noticing the game room, led his sister to it.

“Until it is time for the entertainment, let's wander around.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

The two went inside the game room.

Again Lee Hyun was amazed.

'It exceeds 1,000 Won per round for each game....'

Royal Road is the ideal of the mainstream world.

In virtual reality, you can achieve anything. For the simple entertainment from an old machine, a simple screen will appear with hand controls that costs 1,000 Won for each use. You pay cash and also calculate the amount taken since it gives none back. This is an environment to waste your money in just moments.

'These crooks!'

Lee Hyun gave out a sad sigh.

The world of entertainment was not able to give a peace of mind.

This over-inflation of prices!

Money earned from blood and sweat spilled by blowing on a few moments of entertainment was good for nothing.

“Older brother, which game would do?”

“Well, let's have a go at it.”

The best entertainment at this point for Lee Hyun would be the one that looks the cheapest. Some kind of tennis game for two people to compete against each other to win. At the game, Lee Hyun's hand trembled. Playing by putting money into it.

This was absolute fear.

Pain, terrible pain, as money left his pocket!

Probably at seeing the most terrifyingly thriller movie ever, he still would not have been afraid. Lee Hyun and his younger sibling paying for a game. The cheapest one was 500 Won. Will have to be strong to hang in there for 1 hour in a game that normally takes 2 minutes. If against the other sibling, two more wins, then it's all gone! Money going down the drain.

Lee Hyun went rigid in the face as he smiled.

“This is boring, let's look at a different game.”

“Yes, brother.”

Lee Hyun now found a game that was not a competition type.

'This game is preferable; as long as you can contribute something.... everything is free!'

He found an airplane game.

The objective of the game is to fly a plane and shoot down enemy aircraft by firing missiles. This was popular in the 20th century, and even now people are still enjoying classic games with simple operation.

“Let's try doing this.”

Lee Hyun was delighted as he sat in front of the game.

Two people can play this game together by inserting 1,000 Won.

'Can withstand 1 hour with this!'

The first mission was to attack the enemy's aircraft character. Flying proudly and shooting down enemy planes while timely not attacking friendly bombers. Victory was not difficult. But the

astronauts that came from the second mission were unknown. An extremely fast UFO ride in a ship emitting laser beams covering the full screen! Missile, surface-to-air-missile; but regardless, the inexpensive loss is behind me.

“Keoheok!”

“Haha! This is fun!”

Lee Hyun endured as his younger sibling was enjoying herself.

'Since my sister likes this.'

They played the airplane game once then went off in search of a different game.

[Find what is wrong with this picture!]

A game that could last a really long time. First of all, it is necessary to have to pay for two people. Two people can simultaneously watch and search the screen till one of them finds it. When you succeed past 10 stages, you can win a teddy bear. His eyes were getting bloodshot from seriously looking for what was wrong in the picture, yet Lee Hyun was feeling severely betrayed. It is like finding a pearl from the ocean!

Lee Hyun took this as a very demanding challenge. For the money spent, get that doll! But then this stage was even trickier. Find the missing piece of puzzle in the sand! Find different leaves

in a forest pattern! What island is not on the world map! Find an ant with 4 legs!

It appeared that the mission was only to make him completely frustrated. If you cannot find it in the time limit, then the money is lost; it was like his life was dying off bit by bit. Whenever the two failed, the amount increased. The picture searching game was set to eat money at a horrible speed.

But Lee Hyun carried on in patience.

To use up money is the poison of youth.

'I will find you no matter what.'

At this point, the money far exceeded the value of the doll. Nevertheless, one more hurdle was passed. So now to the final stage. Lee Hyun stared unblinkingly and waited. Finally, what appeared from the next scene...

Find a specific Star within the Milky Way!

'Crap!'

Lee Hyun was forced to abandon. Even with this, it's too much. At least tens of thousands of stars, how will you know If some are missing somewhere in the middle.

'What hardship!'

He felt naive, to believe that he could get a teddy bear from [finding what was wrong with the picture], he must have been a fool. There was a time when doing the work was fun in itself.

'I guess Royal Road is the only proper one to go with.'

From then on, Lee Hyun decided to just find a game that was simple enough. But there weren't many games. If 2 players determined victory, then the game wouldn't last for long.

'I can't spend more money, is there not a single game that can last a little longer?'

Then Lee Hyun saw a Tokyo dancing game and felt that was the one. You first go into a small room in order to play. You take actions according to the instructions listed and all related behaviors are shown on the centre of the screen. It was a dance competition; you compete by scores after the game.

'This will be difficult.'

Lee Hyun saw that the instructions appearing before the eyes and the flow is so fast that the movements are miraculous. Move your hands vaguely and move your feet on the ground as you ride the rhythm of the beat, the body even more superbly, the flamboyant dance moves were displayed on the screen.

A Dance showdown!

High school girls were surrounding them and middle school girls were gathering as they were all admiring it.

“Oh, you should try it, older brother.”

“Are you sure?”

Lee Hyun was a completely noob in dancing! Well, might as well push forward. The little sister was glad to see his reaction and privately wanted to see it.

'There's a line, with that many people, it will be a 15 minute wait.'

Beyond this, he would rather save time. Then Lee Hyun stood at the end of the line to dance. It seemed that most of those standing in line were men. The boys had necklaces, earring and all the latest hairstyles.

'Look at this hick.'

'What's with him?'

'Just ignore him.'

'No. He will be embarrassing.'

The boys privately glanced and mutually winked at each other. Even so, they already had their attention focused on Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan. Everyone was thrilled the moment the beautiful Lee Hayan entered the game room. An attractive and cute high school girl. Then they saw her with Lee Hyun and watched her play cheap sucker games as she smiled brightly. Everyone was in a bad mood.

'This is a good way to fully embarrass him.'

Boys who stood in line intentionally excused themselves. Thanks to that, Lee Hyun turn came quickly.

“Brother, Good luck!”

“Yeah, I'll do my best.”

Lee Hyun went into the small room and his hairs stood on end. At that place, he had no idea of where to start or even choose the kind of dance. Varieties of dances according to region and time, but he lacked the fundamental knowledge. Finally Lee Hyun just selected one.

Freestyle.

Extreme Dance.

Coincidentally, this boasts the highest level difficulty for dance.

Having started, he now must press the arrows corresponding to the symbol fast and precisely to dance. The selected dance that only people of the highest level are able to do.

“Oh man, what a novice.”

“A guy with no tact chose Extreme Dance.”

“This will be totally embarrassing.”

Lee Hyun's choice was reported through the screen outside, and they openly laughed at him. They were thinking that as soon as the real game starts, Lee Hyun will panic and move around wildly. People were normally overly conscious of those in line outside of the game.

'As it is, depending on this you will not get embarrassed.'

His body went full force following the unfamiliar dance moves, but as the hand and feet instructions approached, he sometimes had trouble. Various arrows of different distance caused Lee Hyun to struggle as it went even faster. Pressing to the exact moments, it was not an easy task. He executed complicated actions as his mind registered them as they occurred. The hp of Lee Hyun's character was in a rapid decline. In the background a crowd was filling the dance floor of the club. Lee Hyun's opponent was overwhelming, showing dazzling dancing skills. Then in one moment, Lee Hyun changed slightly.

'Dancing. I don't know how to dance.'

The fact is, it is not possible to suddenly do something you don't know how to. What it feels like to ride the rhythm, feel the music, he had no idea. He thought that only a highly cultured man would be able to dance this. But if this is about moving one's own body.

'I wield a sword, though this is fine as I do not need one in my hand. As an opponent makes a step near to me, I walk a step contrary to them. Fighting the enemy with my hands. My foe jabs first as I strike with the palm of my own hand.'

All of a sudden, Lee Hyun's actions have changed.

You can state that his body was excessively tense. His hands and feet had no place to go. Of the arrows that came out, he had been forced to follow the actions of the opponent, rather than precisely direct attacks. He considered the goal of moving his hands and legs and he unleashed. He was now kicking and twisting at the waste, rotating his body. His arms moved very quickly. He used his fists and elbows at very precise timing against those arrows.

Soon, Lee Hyun's movement projected through the screen.

“What the heck is going on?”

“This is amazing.”

The actions were associated with dance. And this was related to

music. He followed the instructions with his eyes, heard with his eyes, and he watched. From his previous actions, the tide had turned. Even though Lee Hyun's character had only 1 square of vitality left, he rebounded and overwhelmed the opponent. Exactly like in Royal Road, he was victorious; the patience in order to make sense of the situation and to counter it.

“What is that guy!”

The faces of the guys in the line were completely ridiculous from shock. A complete novice that had no idea just a bit ago was making such movements and quickly become proficient.

To dance similarly and press those arrows. Extreme Dance moved too quickly, because it was impossible to resonate with the dance, and that to by swaying properly. But Lee Hyun's movements showed that he can make a new dance in response. The body flowed at an astonishing speed, while making endlessly beautiful moves.

“Wow, you are amazing!”

“A real man.”

The high school and middle school girls cheered. Soon other challengers appeared. To try to end Lee Hyun's popularity! But Lee Hyun had been accustomed to such battles. He learned a little bit about how each action should be made. A lithe body must go with the flow of the music and position itself to the arrows simultaneously.

Lee Hyun had a whopping 10 game winning streak. In truth, it would have been even more than that, but it was almost time for the movie. As he left the room, the other entrant freak out on him. They spoke critically to him. What do you mean? You just entered. Invariably, he took no action. As he moved, the look in his eyes caused them to step gasp and step back. Like in moving the body to where the arrow appeared, Lee Hyun found his sister and spoke.

“Let's go to the movie.”

“Yeah.”

It was time for the movie to begin.

Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan sat down on the padded seats to watch the movie. In fact, the movie was not that entertaining. The Korean film had a simple story and followed a typical pattern. Men from the backstreets. Importance in their friendships, and their love to fight. However, the two found themselves attached to different organizations and grew apart in opposing interests. However, then a pretty heroine appeared and a love triangle created for the two. The childhood friends suffered.

Friendship and power. At the end, the hero was betrayed by the friend he trusted the most. In order to gain power and money, the woman did a final betrayal with a knife in the back. At that time, the male protagonist was an ambassador.

- I resonated with him as well. But as much as I loved him, it

could not be so.

The tragic beauty spoke as the ambassador was bleeding on the floor. In the midst of all, the detective intervened and both of them fell; it was an unbearable story. Somehow it finished like that.

“What the hell is the story!”

“Don't you think this was far over hyped?”

“The author must have written it with his feet.”

“But such a simple story took 2 hours?”

“It wasn't really that good.”

The audience hurled extreme critical comments as one. Most of the rave reviews reported by movie sites caused this reaction, damping the good reputation of the movie studio that produced it. But for Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan, who wanted to see a movie with her brother, it was just simply okay. Saving money is important, but they also created memories that they never had before. Their life hard pressed every month and there was no time to play. Thus coming to the theatre to watch a movie was enjoyable in itself. It would not be advisable to resent it and lose this joy just because they were fed up with the content of the movie.

“Brother, what do you think? The movie was a little weird, right?”

As Lee Hayan looked at the seat beside her, she was startled. Lee Hyun was crying!

Friendship and betrayal. Such a manly story. As the screen was filled with battle, Lee Hyun's body shook in response. He was completely immersed in the movie for its entire 2 hours. Even as the credits started to roll at the end of the movie, Lee Hyun still hadn't recovered.

“The male protagonist of this movie was too cool. Such a story. This movie was really interesting.”

“.....”

After watching the movie, once Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan came out onto the street outside, it was almost 6pm.

“Brother, I'm starving, let's just go home.”

As Lee Hayan spoke, Lee Hyun shook his head.

“No. You're not going to eat rice.”

More than that, eating out!

Normally, they would go home and after getting hungry from swordsmanship or painting, they would eat rice rubbed with

Gochujang (red pepper sauce). Today was not a busy work day, nor was there any plan to practice fencing or painting over there. In fact, at home, you can solve it with a free meal! However the stingy Lee Hyun just mentioned eating out. This was highly unusual. Lee Hayan's interview at the University of Korea was regarded so significantly.

“So, where do we eat?”

Lee Hayan was delighted. In fact, she was shocked just from being able to see a simple movie. Not just watching a movie, but to actually enjoy a meal outside, she was truly looking forward to it.

“But where do we eat?”

Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan started walking down the street. Usually they would never have eaten outside, so they did not know a place to go. As they walked around, Lee Hayan pointed at a building.

“The seasoned rice cakes there are good. All of my friends tell me that place is delicious. They say that the kimbap, tempura and even the oden are good.”

“Really?”

Lee Hayan was pointing at a small group of stores. That seemed too normal for Lee Hyun. After all, he wanted to treat her something special today. So he gathered his courage. They were in

the middle of the city, and respectively, they should go to the city's centre.

“The only place to go, let's eat at a restaurant.”

Lee Hyun pointed to where the hotel was.

'A restaurant in a hotel is really different.'

Looking at the quality of the expensive looking interior, the smiling faces of the staff overflowing with kindness, the impression of hospitality and the people eating delicious looking dishes, the luxurious atmosphere in the restaurant was overwhelming.. The guest chair was comfortable as he waited to be called. In addition, all the surrounding décor seemed to be expensive.

'I wouldn't go here twice, but every once in a while, it's nice to eat in a place like this, especially on a day like today.'

Lee Hyun checked his wallet.

'Had 200,000 Won, used a taxi, went to watch a movie and play some games. Still have 130,000 Won remaining.'

At most, rice would do for a meal.

Nevertheless, Lee Hyun went about thinking hopefully. A table

stood out, where a lobster course was being served. At that moment, Lee Hyun instantly thought of the cost it would end up as.

'I suppose the cost for the materials would be 40,000 Won. Though, with this hotel, considering cost of labor and profit, 70,000 Won?'

With many ways to look at it, considering 70,000 Won for one meal is a bit overboard, something that older brother would not buy or could afford. Lee Hyun thought a little harder about Royal Road and spoke to appease his nervous sister.

"It's okay, let's eat a lot today. At least, just once in a place like this."

"Still, it looks expensive here... Brother, let's just go out and eat kimbap."

In truth, being at an upscale restaurant like this for the first time was so formidable, but he came here to relax and he eased the tension in his mind.

'Look at the expensive artwork, even the royalty in Rosenheim Kingdom could not afford it.'

The waitress came over a few moments later and unfolded a menu for them.

“What would you like today?” The chef's special today is Omar prawns with Oyster sauce...”

“Give me a moment to decide.”

“Yes. I understand, sir.”

Lee Hyun relaxed as he looked at the menu.

Then he checked the price!

A lobster course is 120,000 Won.

For only about 40,000 Won for the cost, when you look at the tremendous cost, they are robbing you.

'Why is it so expensive!'

The price left Lee Hyun breathless. The A course was relatively inexpensive. Beyond that, it was packed with expensive dishes. A meal was 200,000 Won, with wine it was 300,000; then if you include foreign wine it exceeds past 500,000 Won. With his money, Lee Hyun could afford neither the bottle of wine, nor the food.

The price of the hotel's restaurant is murder!

The use of various services and the finest ingredients, the chef is

also of the highest level. Including the expense of the interior and atmosphere with the price of the meal, this was bound to make it expensive. However, this far exceeded Lee Hyun's range of the expected price.

'I absolutely cannot afford to eat this.'

The precious remaining money was too little to have it work out, he was frowning increasingly. Instinctively, Lee Hyun and his sister looked at each other at the same moment. Their eyes locked. She was extremely nervous.

'No, I brought us here; even though it is expensive, leaving is not going to happen.'

No matter how little money he has, he did not want to point out that flaw and look impoverished. With an impressionable high school student with him, Lee Hyun judged that he did not want to be thrown out while in the middle of the dining room. Fortunately, the A-course meal is 120,000 Won, leaving 10,000 Won of his money remaining.

“Hayan, is lobster okay?”

“Yes but, are you sure....”

“We will take the A-course.”

“Will it be for the both of you?”

“Yes.”

“Enjoy.”

What Lee Hyun did not know.

The price not stamped on the hotel restaurant menu is the government tax and service charge of 10% respectively. The price was substantially more than 130,000. But that was a small point. Though it is expensive, they could share it; but naturally the order was for two. An A-course meal's cost was 120,000 Won per. Therefore, the price of the meal was well above 250,000 Won.

“The food will be delicious. Eat your fill.”

“Older brother. Are you sure you not overdoing it?”

“It's fine. I have enough money.”

Lee Hyun tapped his pocket.

The food soon arrived. Cooking made by a head chef of the highest caliber with fresh ingredients.

“Wow! This is really good.”

“Yeah, the taste is great.”

Lee Hyun was enjoying the flavor of the food. Like Royal Road, things can make a big difference in the taste of the cooking itself. He understood the skill required, particularly with seafood. It is easily damaged and needs to be stored. Also the cost is expensive and not eaten frequently. The effect of cooking and eating well has a huge effect when conducting a battle.

*

In the same restaurant, 2 high school girls wearing their school uniforms were eating a meal at a nearby table.

“Woah! This meat is very delicious!”

“The sauce is not that bad either.”

“The head chef came from France; he comes out frequently in cooking magazines.”

“So that's how it is.”

“We'll come again next week.”

These girls were from a rich house, and they were also gourmets, occasionally they would raise money to eat a meal at a restaurant like the one here.

Happiness is best when you can eat delicious food!

This motto was shared by the two girls. They would come by when the school day ended early and placed this as one of their hobbies. But then her eyes looked out to a different table and noticed a joyful Lee Hayan, who was eating.

“Ah? That's Hayan, isn't it?”

“I know.”

“Oh! That would be her brother.”

Lee Hayan was the girls' closest friend.

The fact was, in school nobody disliked Lee Hayan. Strong willed, well-studied, and excellent athletic skills. With her innate leadership, the other high school girls would always coalesce with her in the centre. She's also a cheapskate, thus this was absolutely amazing, as she did not participate in shopping or eating out. She then thought.

'Bloody hell. Yet she would only spend the little quality time with her brother, that's just not fair.'

Isane had a mischievous glint in her eyes. (Yi-san-eh, would be closest pronunciation... Isane, Yisaneh, or Yisanye. Which one to

use is up to debate.)

Lee Hayan was always proud of this guy, yet they did not know why. These friends surely, surely didn't.

This perfect looking girl had the toxic infatuation of severely following her brother. But it was the brother on that festival. Her friends didn't see how she could be so boastful of this guy that looked so ordinary; they thought it had to be a joke.

They later learned that he dropped out of high school due to money. At the high school festival, he immediately set off for the princess and made it look like a breeze, making him a top celebrity. He walked lightly on the slippery and narrow wooden bridge, kicked at water balloons that were flying at him in mid-air. At the end, he sprang up like a kite over the wall, breaking through to the princess with the shortest time. When the brother opened the bars and saved her, how handsome he was, he looked such a man! Since that happened, the high school girls were more interested in Lee Hyun's body. Now when Lee Hayan is with her brother, not even a devil would dare to approach and interrupt her.

At this distance, Isane whispered.

“Let's join them.”

“Knowing Hayan's temper.... is it still gonna be okay?”

“It's okay. With her brother in front of her, she will act ideally.”

Isane arose and walked with confidence to Lee Hayan's spot and suddenly hugged her.

“To think we would meet in a place like this! Can we sit?”

“.....”

Suddenly, friends of Lee Hayan emerged and left her with surprise.

“You guys!”

Not even in the slightest did Lee Hayan expect this unpleasantly fierce appearance.

Isane hurried to greet Lee Hyun.

“Hi, we are Hayan's classmates. Would you mind if we join you?”

“Welcome. Feel free to do so.”

Having his sister's friends sit at the same table, it wouldn't matter much. Rather, in many ways it might be a good thing.

“The genuine me!”

Lee Hayan was frowning as she glared across the table at Isane, who was laughing.

“Now I can't keep a straight face. Hayan. Still, are you okay?”

“Sheesh!”

It was inevitable; Lee Hayan could do nothing to stop this. She did not like uninvited guests barging into midst of her happiest moments with family. However, she had to quickly correct her expression. She did not notice that she was still sitting in front of her brother. Getting angry can be saved for later.

'I'll see you at school! You guys are so dead!'

Whatever the circumstances, Lee Hyun was delighted seeing his sister's friends. With a variety of courses coming for dinner, the four people enjoyed a relaxing meal.

'Nevertheless, still doing well at school.'

It appeared to Lee Hyun that his sister's smooth school life was not that bad. Daily, he had been busy hunting in Royal Road, and now he was giving his weary soul a rest.

“Oh! That's pretty.”

During the meal, they saw from the side of the table, ice

sculptures being transported near the window.

“Now take a look at this.”

Lee Hyun turned his head and glanced at the statue. It was of a Korean woman who wore elegant clothes with a pigtail ribbon finely braided into her hair. (A pigtail ribbon is a wedding ornament)

'That's not bad.'

As Lee Hyun had a little bit of experience with ice sculptures, he could see that the statue was made with very excellent workmanship.

'It gives a vibrant feel, yet also quite gentle. From the hand of a master.'

As Lee Hyun and his younger sibling thought about the statue, the waitress came over.

“Guests, I'm sorry but it will become slightly noisy since we are in the middle of preparing a wedding anniversary for an esteemed elder. I hope you will understand.”

“We are fine.”

In the background was a little bit of mending and repairs, but

soon Lee Hyun and his sister finished eating. At last, the last dessert of fruit and ice cream came and the four ate it in a flash.

“Ah, I'm full.”

“That was really yummy.”

The four went to the counter to pay. First went Isane and Song Miyong. Then Lee Hyun went to pull out his wallet to pay.

RUMBLE!CRASH!

Chapter 4: The Restaurant Of Hotel V

From the early day, the restaurant was always bustling as the managers and employees prepared to fit in VIP customer. The wealthiest person in the Republic of Korea. An accomplished man who made his own fortune from starting with nothing; he was Chairman Kang who had made this dinner reservation. There is always some dish that you will criticize, but the head chefs and the managers knew that this one was in fact special.

It is said that Chairman Kang, a devoted husband, was rumored to be having his 40th marriage anniversary commemoration meal with his wife. The hotel was making preparation for this.

According to the interests of Chairman Kang's wife, objects of art must first be hung on every wall, and new carpet must be spread on the floor. A band famous in the country, and even worldwide, must hold a concert; then a commemoration cake is to be made, and decorated with the light of 1,000 candles.

In regards to cooking, the preparation must promise perfection. Each ingredient, in order to maintain a level of freshness, must be transported by air from the mountainous region of a foreign nation. They go out from the kitchen and catch the airplane's flight. But the most important thing was the event that commemorates the marriage.

In order to mark the beautiful features of when Chairman Khan's wife was young, a foreign sculptor that was famous worldwide created an ice sculpture especially for this.

It was a beautiful woman in ice!

At the North Pole, this ice statue was made from arctic ice. The surface shone like a white gem. It took far longer than 20 days to mold the face into the ice. Not even a single rough spot on the ice surface could be found. Under the ornate chandeliers, the light reflected and refracted in sweet rolling waves.

“So pretty.”

“It was rumored that a guy like Chairman Kang would prepare such an event for his beloved wife.”

The hotel employees were quite envious as they prepared for the event. Chairman Kang was to have his meal on the table in front of the beautiful ice woman. However, as they were loading it and placing it near the table, the glass of the window broke and it fell on to the floor. As it fell, it shattered.

The manager was in disbelief.

“How did you let this happen!”

“I'm sorry.”

“Sorry, is that all you got to say?”

The incident of the ice statue breaking called for even the General Manager of the hotel. The Manager of the hotel, who could be held responsible for the restaurant, appeared in front of the people in order to directly hear of this matter. The General Manager collapsed to the ground as she saw the broken lumps of ice on the ground; it was hopeless.

The neck of the statue was broken. The damage to the nose, mouth and eyes was so severe that it was impossible to repair. In addition, several parts of it were broken; it was barely possible to recognize the shape of the beautiful ice woman.

“How are we going to afford the wrath of Chairman Kang.... Chairman Kang is an express VIP. He Won't be satisfied with our services. Based on rumors alone, the hotel's revenue will decrease dramatically and it will be the end of us.”

“Even now, no matter how we try to repair it...”

“Repairs? What good will this ice do? The event is canceled. Have all the chefs prepare the best dishes they can. Hopefully, we can satisfy Chairman Kang through our quality of service and try to be victorious over this setback.”

The General Manager somehow did everything she could to sort out the situation. But the staff could do nothing but be nervous.

“We are preparing this event for Chairman Kang. We have decorated our hotel as he requested, be calm.”

“How did we do that, even in the least?”

“Really, You have no right to cancel the event yourself. Chairman Kang must acknowledge that beforehand, General Manager.”

“Ugh.”

The General Manager breathed in a deep sigh. The manager provided courteous services to hoteliers and impressed clients; now she's currently in her late 30s. She's gone through many challenges for the sake of the hotel, but this was a first time for a setback like this. And that too with Chairman Kang, no less.

To someone who was called a representative of Aechoga, if he knew that his 40th wedding anniversary event was ruined, he will not stand for it silently, more like a scorching fire. The general manager considered,

‘There must be a way to rectify this. Can't possibly get much worse than this, the only thing you can do is try.’

“Get a sculptor! Fix the ice as much as possible somehow before Chairman Kang arrives within the hour. Anyway, these broken parts. Polish and attach it back to the ice.”

“But we only have 30 minutes left.”

Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan were watching the turmoil. At first,

when the ice came he thought it was a very pretty sculpture. Then that sculpture cracked and the series of events that occurred due to it turned the restaurant into a frantic mess. Walking around the manager, they jumped back and forth as all the pieces of ice on the floor were rolling around.

The employee that caused the problem did not know what to do; his face was pale. Tears started dripping down.

Then as she watched them and felt pity, she carelessly commented.

“Ah brother, brother's profession is a sculptor. Would you not help these people?”

The Legend of the Moonlight Sculptor.

That was in Royal Road, and Lee Hyun had barely mentioned it to her. Lee Hayan never forgets. The employees at the front counter did not miss the chance to hear it.

“Guests. Huh, our guest is a sculptor? Then please help us, even if only a little.”

“.....”

Lee Hyun did not say anything. But, the staff heard the comment and the General Manager came running up. As she first saw Lee Hyun, she was suspicious as he was too young. Yet, in a situation

like this, you can afford to take liberties. A sculptor is not a job that can be easily found in real life. It was not possible to obtain one in 30 minutes, but with one readily brought to you?

The general manager begged.

“Please help us. Please.”

“I ask that you repair the ice carving.”

The employees.

It was inevitably; Lee Hyun couldn't possibly deny this request from these men and women. An accident that someone else caused, how could he become responsible? But now his sister was watching. At the very least, he did not want to be inhumane in front of his sister.

*

Mr. and Mrs. Kang arrived exactly 30 minutes later, along with their secretary and attendants. You could feel that Chairman Kang was a stubborn, old man. He and his wife came finely dressed in traditional Korean clothing. The food was set out according to the reservation, and the manager greeted them with a smiling face.

“Have a good time.”

Over 100 candles were lit in the place.

“I'm grateful. Hmm, are you set as per the order?”

“Yes. They will arrive shortly.”

Today of all days, Chairman Kang was in an unusually good mood. This was because his wife was pleased. During their 40 years of married life, there had been a lot of twists and turns. This place today was where they wished to commemorate all the time they've been together.

Chairman Kang sat in his place and commented.

“Quickly give out as I planned. We will take our meal now; I want to surprise my wife.”

“Yes. We will do so.”

As they ate and drink, the manager did not lose her friendly smile, even though she was sweating. The food itself, the staff was bright and cheerful, and the band was playing. About the time the meal started, Chairman Kang had a slightly ambiguous smile as he asked his wife.

“Is this not fun?”

“Yes. I'm glad. This restaurant has quite a good atmosphere.”

The Chairman unseemly scratched his head at his wife's answer. No matter how big his business got, he was still no different to his wife since the time of their youth. For 40 years, believing in his happy marriage, he was able to spend all of his driving force and concentration on his business. The pale face of Chairman Kang's wife was slightly blushing. A smile surfaced on his face full of wrinkles.

“However, it is a bit awkward coming to a place like this at our age.”

“You're still young. Let's go out more frequently.”

Gradually, the mood was ripening.

'But that event I prepared, when will it start? I wanted that to surprise my wife...'

Chairman Kang signaled to the secretary with a quick glance. He had already instructed them to leave the statue in front of the table before mealtime. However, no statue was there.

'What is taking them so long?'

Gradually, time had passed. The hors d'oeuvres included a simple soup and authentic food.

Only at that time did the statue come out. But, it was just a big fat lump of ice as tall as a person!

They had to angle the sculpture on its side to get it past the door. The staff carried the ice and positioned it directly in front of the table Chairman Kang was eating at.

'What is this!!'

Chairman Kang was displeased as a frown covered his face. He had ordered the work of a world-renowned sculptor. Something about this felt wrong.

'Such a mistake would not happen now.'

His eye then noticed the carpet below the table. What was quickly cleaned, the carpet was wet.

'It's not possible... the ice broke?'

In his anger, Chairman Kang was about to get up.

Then there came Lee Hyun. Carrying carving tools, including a hammer and a chisel, he at first tried to repair the ice sculpture. Yet, the shock made cracks which traversed throughout its entirety. The statue was not able to stand upright. With the damage to the neck and face from the fall, it was already impossible to regain the original appearance through repairs. Eventually, the restaurant spent their effort in preparing more ice

within the 30 minutes, and it worked.

This is not a sculpture, but a complete mass of ice.

Lee Hyun was holding the carving tools in front of the ice. A cold chill puffed out from the lump of ice. For a sculptor to make a more than precious work, what is fundamental is the materials used.

Lee Hyun touched the ice with a glove-less hand. It was said it would be cold. A proud and unbroken rough chunk of it!

'It's not that much different.'

It was not that different from the natural ice he used from the Mora province.

'Then I can do it.'

It was his first time making a statue in real life.

It was a tense moment. He initiated work that he had never done, but at least he will try his best.

Caen! Caen! Caen!*

Lee Hyun carefully defined it as he carved the block of ice. He

could not know how beautiful Chairman Kang's wife was in the past. He had no photo of that time to go by, nor was he able to remember the delicate face of the original statue.

According to the height, the eyes and the shape of the nose, the impression was rapidly being changed; it had now the face of a woman. As he had nothing to go by through memory, he started to delicately carve the features of Chairman Kang's wife, as she appeared currently. A sculptor must have some understanding of the target. Would Chairman Kang's wife be embarrassed about her wrinkled face? Time will pass, and the features age; some would cry out or become shy about it. When you are young, being beautiful, everyone wants it to be eternal, but that cannot be and the result is sadness. She lived with her husband, who loved her so for 40 years. She was far past fitting such a description of crying about such a thing as lost youth.

She would not be ashamed of a wrinkled face that was gained, through the flow of time. She spent 40 years living together with her husband, in faith and affection. Things were not always good. Having suffered hardships. Raising children and preparing them for the future is difficult, she had a tough life.

Though she had her troubles, it was also rewarding. These last 40 years were the happiest of her life, not the days before it. Their meal together, at this time and place, you can see the gentle smile of this grandmother, so he carved it safely, little by little to perfection.

Lee Hyun's delicate touch at carving the ice sculpture attracted the attention of many people. The hotel and restaurant staff

watched nervously. In their minds, they urged and entrusted the sculptor. However, they were still not relieved. Around the table he could see that Lee Hayan and her friends were watching.

*

Initially, Chairman Kang was furious and was about to get up from his seat. To criticize the inadequate preparation made by the hotel; however, the instant Lee Hyun began to cut away at the statue, he endured instead. Though his anger was not reduced, his wife was watching curiously. Already his 40th wedding anniversary was ruined; along with what he wanted his wife to see. He just wanted to leave.

'Well, let's see how you do. However, you better be prepared when it turns out horrible.'

Chairman Kang was very uncomfortable, but as the statue was gradually being made, this unpleasant feeling was gently being relieved.

The statue was of his wife, as she's currently.

It showed the happiness of her heart.

Admiring such work was unavoidable.

"Sweetheart."

Chairman Kang took hold of his wife's hand. Although wrinkled in age, these old hands were familiar, ones he has always held.

'If it was not for these hands I hold, my life would be meaningless.'

Chairman Kang shook his head. I would not be as happy as I am now, with any other woman.

Her hair was lighter colored in age, and it all paled in comparison to her former beauty. Such a long time had passed, and looking at her, it shows; but, that meant nothing now.

Rather, he felt that she was more lovely now than ever before.

*

Kang and his wife persistently waited for the completion of the statue.

Even after their own dinner, some guests returned to see the finishing of the statue.

“Here is some lemon juice.”

“I brought you some fruit, hope you are comfortable.”

The staff handed out snacks to the guests. In their spare time, they threw their gazes on the statue.

“Oh, that is some sculpture.”

“It just seems so beautifully carved, and can't believe it is just some decoration...”

They could see from the sculpture that he was no amateur. Sweat soaked Lee Hyun's forehead as he sculpted. The cold ice he carved was also perspiring. He was sweating even though they lowered the temperature in order to stop the dry ice from melting. The fascination of making such a sculpture. When he carried a sword, he was entirely immersed. In order to create a piece of art, he had to be entirely devoted to his work.

According to the mood he felt, he moved his hands across the sculpture. The time to utilize the techniques and conceptions in his head had already passed. He shaved the statue as the flow of emotions moved his heart.

“It's amazing.”

“I think I entrusted this job to a better sculptor.”

The hotel staff noted that the broken statue from before was of a much higher level than the one Lee Hyun was making. Lee Hyun was certainly insufficient in the delicate hand sculpting

techniques. However, the differences in level were only a few steps away. It could not compare with the previous sculpture. In fact, the sculpture was a little rougher and did not feel as complete. However, Lee Hyun poured his heart into it and it began to emerge.

It is said that a good sculpture gives out its own feeling. This reminds you of a young sculptor smiling brightly just as he made his best work. Of course, he did his best to live up to it. Creating a statue that embodied her charm. However, the statue he made did not hold these special feelings. He did not know how to properly create a sculpture of a person; it was still too far away, his skill was lacking.

On the other hand, with their long time love of 40 years with his wife, Chairman Kang looked into the grandmotherly eyes of the sculpture that Lee Hyun was making. He had taken these emotions and the sculpture was possessed with them. Pouring their hearts to the sculpture.

The artistic profession of a sculptor. Even if this was not a top-level piece of art from the best sculptor.

And finally, the moment the sculpture was complete, thunderous applause rang out within the restaurant. The admiration from the guests, the staff, and even the singers were clapping in unison.

For the stubborn Chairman Kang, tears flowed freely from his eyes. The woman, who fell in love with him for a lifetime, living together for 40 years, was watching him.

In front of this sculpture of ice, she was currently at her happiest.

*

Lee Hyun was soaking wet from sweating all over, he was exhausted.

Chairman Kang suddenly caught Lee Hyun's hand.

“Thank you, this is really wonderful, the most beautiful sculpture I've seen in my life. And more so in the future, I will not be able to see a more grand sculpture.”

Chairman Kang was smiling widely. He was truly sincere in what he said. However Lee Hyun shook his head.

“Isn't the person at your side far more beautiful than the sculpture I made?”

Suitable flattery!

Lee Hyun's instinct started back up.

The moment he completed the statue, his mind returned.

'What else can I do right now?'

He suffered for a few hours by making a sculpture. His hand almost felt numb after handling cold ice. At least in Royal Road, the work you make might become a masterpiece.

Stats and fame!

This was his first time in making a sculpture in real life and he missed that opportunity of earning skill points.

'No, this is not yet the end.'

It was then that Lee Hyun took notice.

If you take a look, Chairman Kang was in every aspect, a business tycoon. He is accompanied by his secretary and if you take notice, it is evident that the manager of this large hotel is catering to him. Might I be on Chairman Kang's good side due to his mood from the sculpture? There is absolutely no chance Lee Hyun would ever let chance escape!

Chairman Kang's comments to Lee Hyun, and even his wife's mirth. If you would ever speak of a truly good-humored couple, they would indeed be it. A touch of flattery in this mood after Lee Hyun's hard work in making a sculpture, everything sounded good.

Chairman Kang was in good mood. To compliment his wife more than his own compliment made him even more exhilarated. Lee

Hyun firmly clasped Chairman Kang's hand.

“Thank you very much. All the work you did for my wedding anniversary is a big deal for me.”

Chairman Kang was very grateful for what Lee Hyun did. In times like this, it is imperative that Lee Hyun say something with humility.

“No, I would have to deny that I'm just a sculptor who sculpted for such an esteemed elder's wife. I did nothing special. Rather, for the hotel giving me an opportunity such as this, and for you Mister Chairman, I give you my appreciation.”

Humility is the highest virtue that can be expressed. Not being modest would even stir up problems, the key is true humility! As the remarks were exchanged, he led the counterpart into a suitably amicable atmosphere.

It was then that the General Manager of the hotel came forward.

“Chairman, this work was not originally planned and he had no relation to this incident. The truth is that this man is one of our restaurant's guests.”

“General Manager, what do you mean? I thought this man came to celebrate our wedding anniversary.”

“Well... the thing is, there was a little accident as we were

preparing the sculpture.”

The General Manager frankly gave the story of how the ice sculpture shattered on the floor during the preparation of the event.

“I'm ever so grateful.....”

Chairman Kang was speechless.

The wedding anniversary that was almost ruined left him with very important memories. Then Lee Hyun opened his mouth. The timing was exquisite.

“If you have finished your mean, could you take the sculpture, sir?”

“What do you mean?”

“It may be just a statue for you, but for me it is a powerful work of art that I finished. This is also a piece that I am very satisfied in. If the hidden intention is to throw the artwork away into the garbage, then it would be meaningless. I could not possibly endure the fact that it will disappear, I would like you to take it.”

“That's....”

It is highly unknown how people ascertain the aesthetic value of

a sculpture and their way of thinking. Their decision is not necessarily clear. However, after this priceless remark, it became apparent to the Kang couple that this also became a treasure that could not be discarded.

Chairman Kang's wife sharply jabbed him in the side. Usually she had a quiet nature; but it was not the case this time. The wife of chairman Kang was unfathomable.

'If I asked this improperly, I will incur a very harsh punishment.'

If he left the statue and did not bring it home, it would be tactless.

Chairman Kang shook his head.

“It would be a mistake. This sculpture is now very valuable to us, and it would be so for a long time, I would like to keep it. It seems, I'll buy this carved ice sculpture.”

The president took out his wallet and pulled out a bill.

Certainly, Lee Hyun declined.

“I did not do this for the money; it is fine as it is, just seeing that it caused you two to be so happy. Just to see you look so affectionately towards each other. To be honest, I am envious of you, honored elders. For it to decorate elder's home, it is truly a dream come true.”

Proper humility straight from the mouth.

All the way till the end, such marvelous ability of flattery!

The mood created from flattery is what the most important to getting what you want. (literal trans. was scam/fraud, lol).

Building up such dignity in front of his wife was highly impressive.

Chairman Kang pulled out another bill.

“At very least, take this as my gift of sincerity.”

“I am still very reluctant.... I insist, the statue is a gift, but I'm happy for these last two minutes I've had with you both. To consider such a piece as valuable in your time of celebration.”

A second refusal.

This is beyond being civilized to save face.

“I can not be so shameless. In exchange for money, make sure you are well paid. If this is not acceptable, how will this old man express his gratitude? I cannot accept a debt not being cleared.”

Chairman Kang repeatedly handed out the bills to Lee Hyun, in such a way that he could not help but take it from the man. He instantly determined the number of circles written on each bill. Verifying the amount and managing money at the same time.

Two cheques worth 5,000,000 Won each.

'As usual, the smell of money is gentle on my mind....'

The Chairman casually pulled out large sums of cash, as much as ₩10 million.

Then Chairman Kang left with his wife. It seemed that the couple probably had a wonderful time at their wedding anniversary dinner.

Having finished his work, Lee Hyun headed to his sister, who had been waiting for a long time.

"I'm sorry. Did I take too long?"

"No, brother. What I saw was really good."

Both of Lee Hayan's friends had sparkling eyes beaming at him. It was a mixture of admiration and amazement, eyes of respect.

Lee Hyun turned to take his sister back to the house. The managers gathered at the entrance. Just as Lee Hyun was about to

take out his money, the General Manager waved his hand.

“That won’t be needed. Why would we take money from a benefactor to our hotel? Your sculpting was great, and sincerely it was a very big deal for us. Although, if you would like to come back and look in at any time, you can use the hotel or restaurant at no charge. Also it is complimentary for the person who accompanies you as well.”

“But....”

“This is from our sincerity. Please just accept.”

With the mogul, Chairman Kang, he did not miss out on even the smallest reward; it was worth every penny. If Chairman Kang had gone out of the hotel angrily, all the people in his business would no longer visit the hotel. The fact is that the damage to the hotel would not have been tolerable.

*

“One, two.”

“The sword is weak in force. Conduct 100 lower body workouts!”

Chung II Hoon was at work, teaching swordsmanship in the dojo.

'This outcome of Royal Road, not bad.'

In modern times, the opportunity to fight with a sword is rare. Particularly, it is even more difficult for practitioners in a dojo. Certainly, ordinary people would not even brandish a wooden sword in any kind of incident.

Such an unfair position, where inferior occupations are more proper.

Just to have the power to endure is very difficult.

For trainees of the sword that was stuck in the middle of this, those that normally thought in such a way are the ones that join such an organization as theirs.

'Royal Road is our very own outlet.'

Fighting monsters and growing stronger, this was what was enjoyable most of all to a simple practitioner. Satisfaction on a daily basis, but not only that is evident, there is a noticeable change that shows in their swordsmanship. The shift in becoming accustomed to sparring against people and battling various monsters with the sword. The opportunity to thoroughly become good in the basics, I would never have expected that such a break for us would have ever existed.

For a long time, sparring in a fight between people did not occur due to the risk involved. Yet in Royal Road, a group of practitioners could fight to their heart's content and in the best conditions without worry.

RING!

Then the phone rang.

Chung II Hoon quietly picked up the receiver, and spoke in a low voice.

“This is instructor Chung II Hoon.”

Chung II Hoon's dream was to go and meet a beautiful but good woman to marry. The instructor's favorite thought was to demonstrate his strength and dependability in front of a lot of girls.

The voice he heard that came from the other end of the speaker was the one he knew well.

“Brother, this is Lee Hyun.”

“Oh hey! How are things?”

“I was thinking of going out for food.”

Chung II Hoon was surprised.

The miserly Lee Hyun buying a meal outside, he couldn't even

imagine such a thought.

“You're asking about us at the dojo? Getting some take out from a Chinese restaurant? A fried dumpling would be nice, even if only one I would be grateful.”

“No, we're going out to eat.”

“Really? Where shall it be.”

“Do you know the location of Hotel V?”

“H--hotel?”

Chung II Hoon was stuttering.

“I know the location, but why do want to go there?”

“Come to Hotel V, I'll take you out to eat.”

“Y, Yes. I understand!”

Before Lee Hyun could possibly change his mind, Chung II Hoon prepared to go in haste.

Nevertheless, he had trust in Lee Hyun's words.

“Also take the whole dojo family. For this is truly a rare opportunity. Huhuhu.”

Chung II Hoon called all of the practitioners and instructors and ordered them to head for the hotel. As he silently played Baduk, Director An Hyun-do decided to join them. Since it seemed they were doing something unusual, like going out to eat, An Hyun-do decided to cut in like a ghost and join them.

“So its a hotel....”

“Yes to go to a hotel.”

“I Wonder, will it be delicious? If it is a place very frequented, it must be very good.”

“Oh, Master is also here with us.”

“.....”

An Hyun-do, the instructors and the practitioners walked to the grand hotel. Of course, this was not a leisurely walking pace that was graceful and relaxing.

It was quick and lively!

The practitioners practically ran the entire way.

They reached the hotel without a single straggler.

“This, this is....”

The guards tried to restrain them, but they ran like the wind. Before long, they arrived in front of the elevator. But the elevator was filled with people.

The eyes of the practitioners were severe. An Hyun-do spoke effortlessly.

“Guys, on a day like this, there is still the stairs, moreover let's use them.”

“Such a reasonable point.”

An Hyun-do led his disciples on foot and arrived at the restaurant, which was on the 20th floor.

Lee Hyun was waiting for them.

“Welcome, Master.”

“Yeah, I'm hungry. Where is the food?”

“Go, it is served within.”

“We can eat freely?”

“Yes, it is all free.”

“You truly are my favorite.”

The Manager of the restaurant already told the staff that he readily consented to Lee Hyun and a large group of acquaintances. Commit the best service for them, the chef should be ready to cook the best they can, and the employees were to be ready waiting.

However, once the door was open and they helped An Hyun-do, the instructors and saw the practitioners come inside, the faces of the staff went grey.

There were more than 500 people!

They gladly occupied all of the tables and made their orders.

“H--here is your wine. Burgandy, Vintage '99.”

CLINKCLINK!

As they drunk all the rice wine, the horrified staff had to comply with refilling of all the glasses.

“This is delicious, another cup!”

“.....”

“Stir-fried meat, 50 more servings here!”

“The food is delicious, but it's taking too long!”

“Let's try to get so full that we almost faint. Everything is on the house. It's all free!”

The practitioners and instructors were at their peak in hunger after swordsmanship training; they released their waistbands and ate and drank without hesitation.

Then An Hyun-do rose up from his seat.

“Everybody listen. For a person training in martial arts like us, it is not a good thing to overeat.”

The Manager and his staff watched An Hyun-do with hope in their young eyes. Near the end however, they could not help but be more frustrated.

“Per person, eat 10 servings each.”

“Old Master!”

500 people, 10 servings each!

For each person, a single serving came out to 7,000 Won. They ate to their heart's content. The food was like a meat buffet, thanks to all of this, the restaurant ran out of ingredients.

“BURP! Now, I'm full.”

“Tasty, I ate well.”

The employees completed serving the dishes and were to the point of collapsing. Their only wish was for them to quickly leave.

However, they were all still sitting, every single person.

'What the hell?'

Choi Jong-bum asked with embarrassment on his face.

“When does desert come out?”

Alongside him, Masang Bum-do spoke.

“If I could eat it every day, it would be nice.”

“.....”

*

Lee Hyun and Lee Hayan came home after watching a movie and having a meal at a restaurant; it was nearly the first outing they ever had outside.

Both were practically exhausted.

'Rather have been wielding a sword for 5 hours straight.'

Lee Hyun shook his head from side to side.

Well, other people do hang out and walk around yet it was so difficult for me.

He found watching a movie to be a difficult thing, and just from wandering around town he was quickly fatigued. In addition, carving at the restaurant. It was really a difficult thing to create a statue carved from ice. Also for the moment, just from a glance his work was unsalable.

However, the day's work Was complete and now he had returned home.

“Goodnight, brother.”

“Yeah, you too. Have a good rest.”

His younger sister went to bed and Lee Hyun changed again into his outside clothing. Normally, after washing up he would access Royal Road. But today he had another place to be.

Lee Hyun went toward the night-time bus to take it to the hospital, sought the nurse in charge of night shift and asked.

“How is grandmother?”

“She is asleep. Because of the cancer cells, she is taking medicine to relieve pain. You can go in now, but it will difficult as it will take some time for her to wake up.”

“Regardless, I will go.”

Lee Hyun opened the door to the room and went inside.

The hospital room was small. Grandmother was lying down on the bed, soundly asleep. Various medical equipment were attached to her body. Lee Hyun sat down on the chair next to her and took her hand.

“I came with good news.”

“.....”

From grandmother, only pale breathing came out, she was asleep.

The devices checked her heart rate, and it stayed in a consistent pattern. She will probably not wake up for 7 hours due to the effects of the drug.

“Hayan had her interview for the University of Korea today. To be honest, there was a bit of an accident so I don't know if it is a pass, but it's still a good thing, right?”

“.....”

“She is already 19 years old now. It has been 14 years since that day. The girl who kept asking where our parents were, while riding piggy back, she's now a real lady.”

Lee Hyun continued speaking to his grandmother as she slept.

“Indeed, a lot of things have happened since that time, and my only wish is that she live her life in happiness. A lot of it was tough back then. At a time there was no food to eat, grandma, you once said that to reduce the mouth of person, you had to give up Hayan. You tried to send her to an orphanage.”

It had been a long time ago, but his sister was about to be sent to the orphanage. In protest, Lee Hyun went three days without eating in order to oppose his sister going to an orphanage.

“Grandma, you told me that I was going to regret it. We actually had to go through difficult meals, and there were indeed many times where I skipped meals. Grandmother, only during that time, I concede that I hated Hayan. Because of Hayan, we hardly could even afford my schooling. I had said abusive things to her, like I would have been happier without her.”

Grandmother had hated the younger sister. Because of the younger sister, Lee Hyun suffered and was often scolded. They severely complained about trivial things. This was another reason why his little sister once went astray.

“I have no regrets. If we return to that time, my choice would have been the same. Because, we are family.”

As she slept, there was no answer, but it eased Lee Hyun's heart. He had kept it all inside for more than 10 years, and now it had ended.

Lee Hyun returned home and went inside the capsule. And he accessed Royal Road.

*

The Yurokey Mountains and the Castle of the Dark Elves!

(note: the choice of name is Yulokina, Eurokey, Eurokina; it is not possible for it to be Europa)

The ruined walls were repaired and the Orcs' supplies had been moved. They were preparing for war with the Undead Legion led by the Liche Shire. Weed was just like he was when he terminated the connection; he appeared in human form in the Dark Elf city. Construction was going on everywhere.

“Chwiit profits!”

“Chwichwit. We Orcs worked hard, we good Orcs.”

“Stack that stone even higher!”

“How high you want it stacked? Chwi!”

“Higher, higher! Chwichichichit have it reach the sky!”

An Orc was carrying an overly large rock. Many rocks were gathered together and stacked in a bunch to make a tower.

CRASH!

“Chwieeg!”

“Kkwaeeg. Orcs save me!”

This over accumulation of rocks for the tower groaned and

crumbled at a touch, crushing the Orcs beneath it. The Dark Elves were a little bit different from the Orcs. With them owning more intellect, all they did was roll their eyes.

“Those Orcs are hard at work.”

“More like having too much fun.”

“We are elves. No equal in power.”

“Naturally, that is so.”

The Dark Elves were eagerly goofing off and smoking.

Weed was away just temporarily, and in just 5 minutes of his absence everything became a mess and now he had the task of repairing it all once again.

Piles of rocks were scattered without order all over the place and it was a battle to collect all the neglected materials that accumulated throughout the area. Part of the castle was destroyed from Orcs smashing and burning. The Dark Elves were sprinkling salt on the grilled dishes. Generally, elves detest killing life and do not eat meat; however, Dark Elves did not have such qualms. Given that Dark Elves are initially fallen elves with blackened skin, other elves consider them as quite a savage race.

“This is the power of salt. You savage Orcs.”

“Indeed.... We also found that out. Eating with a sprinkle of salt, it's delicious.”

In the name of fighting against the undead, Orcs and Dark Elves made a dramatic reconciliation. They drank alcohol and ate roasted meat together. So, many Orcs and Dark Elves were gathered in the castle's marketplace, indifferent to the plan.

To take these ignorant and lazy people and fight the legion of undead with them....

With his head constantly throbbing, Weed felt seriously ill.

“Captain! We have accomplished our tasks.”

At that time Buren appeared, Becker, Hosram and Dale as well! The Royal Knights and priest.

'But these guys are so few, is there any hope? Even if the quest fails, if I could only send these guys safely back to Rosenheim Kingdom, the contribution from the royal family can be obtained. Items obtained from such a contribution!'

Contribution of money and connections.

To Weed, these soldiers were more important than anything.

But the lieutenant spoke.

“As you asked, all of our supplies near the town were moved here.”

“Well done.”

When he looks at Buren, he sees reliability.

The first time he met with Becker and the rest was in the hellish lair of Litvart, where they undertook a dangerous mission together.

Faith and trust in Buren!

But the point that Buren made of where the supplies were was negligible. No, they are there nonetheless. The weapons of war: arrows, daggers, the mace that soldiers wear and other kind of weapons. That was already a loss, but what was important was the wine bottles he had for wholesale.

Ever since Weed arrived at the Yurokey Mountains on the Plains of Despair, he wandered to his heart's content. He collected various acidic berries! Serpents and precious medicinal herbs!

High-quality materials utilized only when immersed in a solution of alcohol; if you were to consume even more than one you would only notice the sweet taste before you die. No, perhaps consuming more might not kill a person.

He collected clear dew at dawn to distill various liquors. Weed had then made bottles of wine which now was all gone.

“My wine bottles, where did they go? Maybe they haven't been transferred yet. Maybe that's it, right?”

“Well...”

Buren hesitantly pointed at the orcs.

“They are drinking all of it; I tried to stop them but....”

Weed then had a thought pass through his mind.

There could not have been alcohol on the Plains of Despair. For Orcs to be able to brew liquor, it would be impossible. Therefore those damned Orcs must have been drinking Weed's liquor.

“Delicious. Chwiik!”

“SNIFF! What's that smell?”

Lucid and crystal clear wine was flowing into the scratchy snouts of the Orcs.

“Keoheok!”

Weed wanted to puke blood, intense suffering as if his flesh was being torn.

The alcohol that he brewed.

Every time he made a bottle, weed had hoped.

'Please, give me success in earning a lot of money.'

Through fermenting, you can earn a considerable amount of money selling alcohol.

It took several months for it to fully mature in taste and effects; without even a second thought he had done it all. (originally it was a Korean idiom, kind of like saying 'Absolutely, yes' or 'you bet your life on it')

In his spur of moments of making it, it reached hundreds of bottles of liquor. Precious items obtained and he had to put the alcohol aside as he hunted, but he had no place to hold them so he instructed its management to the soldiers.

This was the result.

“I don't believe this...”

Weed was devastated.

In the meantime, the Orcs were drinking quickly. The dark blue wine sloshed at the bottom of the bottle. Empty wine bottles were rolling haphazardly around. His wholesale liquor disappeared. The money flew out.

“Ahhh!”

Weed groaned in sadness!

Even the beef jerky, the Orcs and Dark Elves were chewing on it.

Weed had made that jerky.

Almost no wine bottles remained, and already the drying baskets that were full of jerky was empty.

'To make again the liquor or food.'

Still, Weed had his hopes.

After all, these were his soldiers.

Though the liquor or the supplies for battle may be lost, he did not lose his loyal soldiers.

“I'm at fault, I'm sorry. The Orcs were so forceful... hic!”

As Buren explained the situation, he had a case of severe hiccups. That was when Weed properly examined the soldiers. Being held up on staggering legs, red in the face. A phenomenon caused by excessive drinking.

“This....!”

Then, all of it became apparent to him.

Buren and Becker, while following his command to carry his supplies, found the liquor bottles.

“It's alcohol.”

“What are we going to do?”

“To do what, I'm the captain right now.”

“GULP! This looks tasty.”

“You think a sip will be fine?”

“You lot, how could you....”

“Come on, let's do it.”

Like trying to entrust a fresh fish to a cat, it would be similar to saying to trust a soldier not to have a bit alcohol before a fight.

At first, the soldiers really only took a sip, but then they got to drinking.

“It goes down so smoothly.”

“Wow! It's so delicious.”

That single sip of the bottle was like an addiction.

Weed's soldiers then committed themselves to their work but couldn't keep it out of their minds, but even then, their fear of him remained.

“This will do, have the Orcs drink it.”

“Let's give it to the Orcs.” (Pretty much they wanted to hide their guilt by blaming it on the Orcs)

So they revealed his little nest egg, his prized position the fermented wine!

“And have to fight against the Undead Legions with things going like this...”

Weed sighed.

*

There was uproar on the internet.

People were driven to connect to the Royal Road website during the morning and daytime.

They always liked to access the reports from Hall of Fame, they were always fascinated.

- Let's reveal that Orc's true identity.
- An alternative magic item that allows you to polymorph or something?
- A type of wizard perhaps. One that can change to a necromancer later on?
- Does this mean people who already switched jobs can become a necromancer?

Wizards were desperate about this.

When a new profession opens up, it means that you can learn new magic soon.

Magic was very precious for wizards, so they wished for more by any means.

Wizards were making a myriad of inquiries to Unicorn, who operated Royal Road.

- Please, can't you tell us about the quest's progress? How can we receive the commission for this profession in any way?

- Disclose the characteristics of the Necromancer profession.

Unicorn's answer was simple.

- This is from headquarters; the quest is still on-going and it would be careless to the user. We are unable to disclose more. You will know of the characteristics of a necromancer when the profession is opened. If the quest fails, the profession will not be shown to the public.

On the pretext of privacy, Unicorn did not reveal any of the current progress.

Then the more anxious users stormed various game sites.

KMC Media, CTS Media, Onstations, Digital Media, LK game.

The viewer feedback form on such broadcasting companies of

games was deteriorating, both domestic and international.

*

The producers of KMC media held a meeting.

Usually this was for the young facilitators on the front line or PD, to participate and express their opinions freely, or to recant about the stories or broadcasts, or for the sake of planning.

However, today something unique occurred.

The heads of other broadcasting stations participated in the meeting.

“The forums are in an uproar. Director Kang, what is happening?”

The Director of KMC Media accessed the website to oversee the reaction of the viewers. What he saw was tens of thousands of posts. The feedback was all about a request to broadcast one quest.

“There is a new movie in the Hall of Fame.”

“Well? What the hell is on that one video to cause this chaos?”

At this period of time, his broadcasting station was first in

audience ratings; in his division, this was never the case.

Director Kang embarrassingly rubbed at his bald head as he replied.

“A quest, it seems.”

“What quest? So many people becoming so excited only for a quest is outrageous.”

The Director tilted his head to the side when a young producer stood up from his seat.

“Right now we will begin our attempt to cover the contents. Show the prepared video for the Director.”

“Why not?”

In the conference room, state-of-the-art equipment to view various videos was installed. With omni-directional surround sound system the entire video appears on the front wall. Granted, this conference room's facilities were natural for a broadcasting station.

During the movie stream, the director, the young producers, nor the organizers could not open their mouths. After a long while, the director spoke.

“This, we will be sure to catch it.”

“Of course, Director.”

Director Kang and all the organizers agreed.

Not only considering the battle of Orcs in front of them. A mystical quest where someone transformed into an Orc. An adventure in uncharted regions. Considering all these things, it is just not enough broadcasting it. Director Kang then spoke cautiously.

“Yet the other stations will not likely let us stay in this. Perhaps various other stations will contract their offers out.”

“You mean it would be difficult?”

“Not entirely. It is just that when other stations compete, the contracting terms will also increase further.”

The problem was always money.

“It is not so possible to spend a large amount of money.”

From the words of the Director, the group was left in a heavy silence.

From the beginning, the company KMC Media did not have a substantial amount of capital.

They had high viewership, but as a fledgling station, they did not have surplus funds as they actively invested their income when many did not. Director Kang carefully let fly their fortune.

“Gentlemen, our financial situation this year from broadcasting so far is not that bad, I know.... but I thought of making a steady surplus.”

“Even so, we don't have enough money to overwhelm the contract offers of other broadcasters, and this brings me to building up an unconventional deposit.”

At the end of the Director's words, the organizers soon became depressed.

Even if you endeavour to work hard, you will see that reality will catch you by the ankle. As there are many other places here and there for money entering into a small broadcasting company, they are always tied to their budget.

KMC Media's motto.

It is only fun if you spend less money!

They were desperate for survival.

The organizers sighed.

'But in order to grow further, you need to invest more....'

'This was always a big issue, like with the downfall of CTS Media who deceived themselves.'

However, the Director was smiling.

“Regardless of the agreement, we will do it.”

“Really?”

“A contract with an incentive. Even if the deposit is exceptional, we will not fail; a smash success due to the performance and advertising can and will distribute proceeds.”

Currently, the rating from Royal Road is continuously at its peak on a daily basis. In increments, the viewership of broadcasting stations for Royal Road rose in succession. The price in advertising sales is also in the midst of growth.

“The audience ratings will rise more than 5%, to share in the proceeds a certain percentage of an advertisement will be given to the broadcasting station in accordance to the contract, and who can say how much money will be given when people download the quest video from the home page?”

KMC was still a small station, but this was a possible method.

Department Director Kang wiped the sweat from his brow.

“Let us form a contract, Gentlemen.”

*

When a video in the Hall of Fame gets an increased number of views by many people, the company Unicorn provides a nominal payment to the original poster. Such a way to earn money was unfamiliar as until now he was used to selling items.

“I will be given money for people to watch it, but there won’t be a difference if I do nothing to make it.... If I can edit it a bit, I can raise the amount I get.”

It was a bit late but Lee Hyun hesitated about purchasing an editing program, even now when the Public Relations Department of Unicorn headquarters was in an uproar.

“Surely he would let other users onto the quest.”

“Oh, that would be great.”

Chang Yun-Su, chief figure in the Public Relations Department was in the operating room and was coming up with strategies with

other people who saw the movie. It was essential to familiarize yourself with the game in order to seamlessly promote Royal Road.

Strategies are not a straightforward task when in the operating room. Studying and understanding the whole background story for each quest. Histories of each of the Kingdoms! Helping in the development of cities as well as background of important figures, the growth of users. These types of things forecast the future direction of the continent of Versailles and this is how strategy in the operation room flows.

“The progress of the quest is already so far, the speed is faster than we believed.”

“What is the problem then?”

“The emergence of the Bar Khan quest is fine if it barely hit to the second quest chain. If you look at the overall picture, yet because of him, this is just not....”

“Yet?”

“The situation seems to have made little difference to the game for now, but if the forces of undead run rampant, the axis of power with the existing forces in the kingdom will gradually effect the users in time.”

The NPC occupation and the rights of ownership for famous castles and fortresses, as well mines, villages and places of business

will be changed. Users in guilds join forces to contribute for a siege, and to take ownership from increasing their occupation. A city may or may not be near the capital of a Kingdom, but they still fall into the hands of users; in fact much of the central continent is already operating with users.

“But what does the Bar Khan quest has got to do with all that?”

A team leader who was very curious asked Chang Yun-Su because he was very familiar about the game's backstory. He clasped his hands as if he was at home and gave a wide smile to the rest of the operators in the room as he listed the possibilities.

“It will be interesting. Bar Khan's complete resurrection with his undead forces and power, in this aspect it will be very different with the hatred of the undead.”

“Well, yeah.”

“Villages and castles under attack from the undead. The undead can even wage a siege with all of the corpses. Their hatred can work both in attack and defense and find more participants. Not only that, keep in mind that in that case the undead can completely dominate an enemy counterattack.”

“On the other hand, the undead can occupy a town or castle?”

“Enough talk on the possibilities. The undead are just one of many types of monster on the Versailles continent. The kingdoms

that become occupied by the infestation of undead will fade away. If the users can purify them, it would become a very big opportunity for such contributions.”

“So this will bring about crisis and opportunity at the same time.”

“Yes, the rewards of this storyline is unexploited, the kingdom in the northern part of the continent lies in the hands of the undead, but.... Regardless, the overall difficulty will rise in the future and we might frequently see the undead.”

Chapter 5: Karichwi Running!

A pub at the capital of Haven Kingdom, Aren province.

Volk stood inside with an impression of filthiness. The employees were at the entrance to take coin and asked questions.

“Business?”

“Rest.”

“5 coppers. For a comfortable rest.”

The atmosphere was different than in a regular pub. Employees elsewhere made it a priority to be polite and treat their customers. Volk looked inside the rough and empty tavern, then sat down. The standard drink was a fruit juice. Other people may think that those who drink a 5 cooper drink would be a beginner. Volk was as high as 367 in level, an ultra-high level user.

Volk was not the only one.

The level of users in this pub was on average, higher than 300. Of the listed guilds, there are few with forces with so many that are level 300 or higher, it is a really unique kind of place.

Dark Gamers specified this pub in the United Nations. A place for

Dark Gamers to take a break.

Jjook. (don't ask me, it seems to be a name.)

Volk drank his prized fruit drank sparingly.

A sweet taste. It is often said that a taste can wash fatigue from your entire body. If food and drink were placed before you, you should eat and sip sparingly. Dark Gamers were characters whose focus was to own money, therefore they would not carelessly waste even a dime.

The Dark Gamers increased their levels since they don't squander. However, it is said that they are not consistently in good condition.

“The Barang cavalry has joined the rebel army.”

“Roam village is seeking mercenaries for a monster attack.”

Within the pub, Dark Gamers would often exchange the latest information.

“There's a contract. A quest to guide someone to the 109th altar of spilled blood, payment 3000 gold. Would you like to give it a try.”

“And the number is?”

“These five recently reached level 190.”

“I'll give you more than 5,000 gold, just consider it.”

The pub took on the role of giving and receiving contracts.

A special way for users to contract Dark Gamers. Depending on your requirements, Dark Gamers would accept or refuse these contracts.

This is the underground economy moving through the Versailles continent!

This is the heat of the moment; Royal Road has become a game that the whole world enjoyed. The number of Dark Gamers even reached a minimum of 20 Million. Scattered like grains of sand, Dark Gamers only appear where there is money and items. Separate but dispersed in behavior, just as much as anywhere comparable in strength.

'This place, it still remains unchanged.'

Volk was resting comfortably.

At once he was recalling the beautiful past. It was of the woman he loves. He started the game for her sake. Played in numerous battles with her. He was unable to live his life without her hearing

his affection for her.

Then finally, on that day he confessed to her!

He had asked that sculptor he met in Rosenheim Kingdom to make a bouquet of flowers for her. The vibrant wooden bouquet had the highest effect; Volk and she were soon married.

Life has been good up to this point.

He was mesmerized by her for over 1 year in Royal Road. Actually, he almost went for it in real life but it did not happen due to being busy. With work and his new job, it was unbearable!

The fact was that they were only able to become a couple due to Royal Road.

“Honey, I earned a lot of money.”

“I picked up a lot of items, come in!”

“You too!”

A complete Dark Gamer couple was born.

His wife was too busy accomplishing quests from the clergy and Volk hunted and roamed alone.

“Excuse me, what is your profession and level?”

Volk, as a Dark Gamer, was sitting alone and a few people came.

These people pay for being colleagues!

It can be difficult to hunt alone, so this is a place where you can find a colleague. Of course, for the division of roles and sharing of the revenue, you must be thorough. As one of the Dark, if you cannot fulfil your part in the bargain, or if you are unreasonably greedy, you will be intercepted and get a record on the United Kingdoms. In severe cases you can find yourself kicked out and executed as the Dark Gamers turn against you.

Volk spoke to them with a soft smile.

“I just came back from afar; I would like to be left alone for now.”

“Oh, alright.”

A few of them offered their apologies as they turned away.

To the Dark Gamers, this pub is their only refuge. One place where you can rest in peace. There were rules, such as not interfering with the rest of another.

RATTLE.

Volk was resting there for some time, then the tavern's door was wide open. It was one person. He was a Dark Gamer. As if it was a proven rule, it was fairly simple to distinguish between them by what they wear. In most cases, Dark Gamers found efficiency as most important, and at the same time they didn't want to bring attention to themselves by wearing fancy equipment.

“Your business?”

“Secret.”

“.....”

Sometimes they are like this.

What is the secret if your behavior alone makes it out to be a secret of the world? It became a new pub as Dark Gamers shared whispers back and forth between multiple tables.

Some Dark Gamers immediately shook their heads. Different people gave a nod of their heads to indicate consent, but after a few additional words of the man, they shook their heads.

There was no appearance of even a little dissatisfaction from the rejections. In fact, the five people had a hint of respect in their eyes toward the young man.

'What are you doing here?'

The man calmly came up to the seated Volk.

“A prospective Grade ‘A’ difficulty quest, you mind?”

“.....”

Volk had a moment of silence.

The appearance of a difficulty A quest was not the best thing. He began to understand why the Dark Gamers rejected him.

“Not tolerable, it would be hard.”

“I have prepared personnel from my own guild. Just obtaining some people I lack with mercenaries.”

“The guild?”

“Crimson Wings.”

The guild is in 10th place among the Versailles continent in holdings. This same guild owns as many as seven fortresses in the central continent.

'If that's so, then if the odds are right.'

It pulled on Volk's appetite.

It was true that he had grown tired of hunting alone.

“Level restriction?”

“About 350 or so.”

“.....”

“Qualified, but stressing over the terms beforehand?”

“Sufficiently so.”

“Well, that's a relief. The base salary is 20,000 gold. In the case that you die in the mission, reparations would be 50,000 gold. For exploration of the ruins, if the progress takes longer than 20 days, 2,000 gold will be given per day.”

“Those conditions are very good....”

“Instead, any items excavated from the ruins are under ownership on my side. As you see, all the quest progression and materials needed are covered by us, so what we ask shouldn't be unreasonable. Also we will take care of the lives in the group.”

So, in a nutshell, it sounds like they don't mind living or dying, or how much they spend.

“The ruins of the Scorpion King...”

Adventure or reward, Volk was pulled in by his appetite and he decided to participate.

*

Pale and Maylon!

The couple had become indispensable.

“Shoot the vital spot!” (or vital spot shot)

Aiming arrows to attack the monster's philtrum and heart at the same time!

After the archers' joint attack Irene followed suit with divine magic.

“Divine light, correct the multitude of evil in this world. Saint blind!”

Radiant white light showed from Irene's hands and they were reflected in the monster's eyes. In fact, the divine magic was a

brutal addition. Blocking the monster's eyesight with bright light. And naturally being blinded, it could not act properly.

“Kueek!”

A monster that walked on two legs was suffering as if it was a tadpole.

Saint Blind also gives a bit of damage. The damage is small as it is made to constrict, but the mana consumption is low and against a monster with evil attributes, it makes the magic easier.

When she passed level 200 and switched jobs to Priestess, she gained the skill.

“Without hesitation, burn like a blazing fire and leave behind nothing but ashes. Fire Field!”

Romune was too formidable. Area effect fire-based magic! At the underground lake, there were monsters with a slight association with the water element. All of a sudden, they were hit with fire magic that was antagonistic to them. Drying up all the water in their body did large damage to them. For a specialist in fire magic, the lake of water elementals was the best hunting grounds for Romune.

“Experience the taste of my steel fists!”

Finally Surka learned a skill she dreamed of as a deaconess.

Gather mana and punch apart the enemies with the skill!

Although they don't consume much mana, archers cannot do damage without being from afar. Being farther than 10 paces, the damage will be intact.

Zephyr, Hwaryeong and Mapan!

Of them, Hwaryeong was particularly welcome to the party.

Irene, Romune, Surka and Maylon, all of them were girls that had looks that can kill.

When on a hunt and there is nothing to do while waiting for monsters, there is nothing to do but relax!

Talking to women.

“The story I broadcasted about yesterday?”

Recent changes.

Maylon's broadcast of the story took her 3 hours. The actual broadcast time was just 1 hour, but there was the process for preparation, arrangement and to meet and speak with the entertainers.

Yet this was not the end of it. We have not even begun.

“I volunteer part of my time outside of that.”

“At our school....”

Romune and Irene were both female college students and each talked about their own stories, clubs and other subjects. They have only been there for barely a year before their leave of absence, but there was no end to their discussions. Surka was a high school student and had interests in various hobbies, reading, collecting plastic models, fashion and so on. As usual, even Hwaryeong adapted immediately to the formidable chatter. She instantly attended the discussion by leading the group with her experience of traveling around the world, such as Milan, Venice, Rome, London, and New York.

These five women achieved complete harmony through intense chatting.

Dancing around enemies, Hwaryeong would attack. Then Zephyr would stand on the forefront of the fight with the monsters. They found that the powerful vitality of an angler can defend enemy attacks. A position dedicated to defend the party like a warrior, because he was an angler, Zephyr took on that role.

Zephyr assumed the most difficult thing!

He and his outrageous vitality had to hold on to the full wrath of the enemies' attacks.

“Zephyr is truly reassuring.”

“I never suspected that anglers could fight.”

“I admit, initially I thought fishing would be very weak, but this is absurd!”

Calming colleagues with flattery!

At first they did not do things like this, as they were once pure. Since meeting Weed they had changed. Praise and flattery! The technique they learned from Weed that will work once again, even today. You can say, they learned to how live in the world.

Even in the midst of things, Mapan's presence was always weak. To the extent that when in battle it is hard to distinguish whether he is there. However, at the end of a battle, right away he pops out and calculates the japtem. After processing the japtem of Geomchi and companions, Mapan became reborn as a large merchant.

*

Citadel of the Dark Elves

Weed re-established his influence with the Dark Elves and Orcs.

His Leadership!

When left unattended, the law and order in an army will gradually decrease over time. Although it was temporary, Weed had to command the Orcs and Dark Elves in order to combat the Undead Legions. Also, Weed's leadership was so high that it was almost too hard to find an equal.

“DO! NOT! PLAY! INSTEAD OF! WORKING! ALL OF YOU!”

Skill: You have used Yell. The morale of your units within range have been increased by 200%

Any state of confusion has been cleared.

In addition, for the next five minutes, 205% more leadership is applied.

“Chwiik! Let's do it”

“Needs to be done. Chwichwit.”

Some of them went back to insufficiently playing, though more than 100,000 of the Orcs remained. In unison, they rose up from their seats to build walls and once again hauled supplies.

Besides the leadership stat, incidentally how well they listen is in

preference to the abilities that the General reflects. In the case of the Orcs, they liked his outstanding determination. Innate belligerence, they followed him because he will not back down from a fight. In the case of Weed's fighting spirit, it did not need to be so high for the Orcs because it was reasonable. The Dark Elves were tougher, they wanted a little more knowledge, wisdom and had an affinity with nature, glamor and art which was reflected evenly.

“He rules over us, although he is not clever enough to know or understand the earth in a significant way. He is just a human.”

“Are you familiar with the story of the falling leaves? I see your artistry, so I'll follow your orders.”

Becoming proficient in the skills he acquired such as cooking, herbalism and others related to the nature. Thanks to his high art stats, this affinity allowed him to lead Dark Elves. The Dark Elves created magical traps and by magic they instantly made trees grow and enlarge around the castle. Magnificent branches spreading all over the area as the tree trunks grew huge in size. Lying within the trees were thorns. The characteristics of the trees made natural rampart. Bushy fruit trees were clustered together. With the absurd number of Orcs, this will play a good role for food for the Orcs.

Vampire Tori actively helped Death Knight Van Hawk pick up large beams. These so-called boss monsters. His subordinates can preside over their own kind. Tori resurrected his own Vampire family that had vanished after the defeat. Death Knight Van Hawk, once again he collected more men to create his own Death Knight

unit.

A tooth for a tooth!

He was ruling his own powerful undead legion here.

Hard at work for the war with the Immortal Legion, Weed headed to the rock tower that the Orcs stacked. And he carved the rock.

A Dark Elf!

He sculpted the spirit of the Dark Elves on the fly as the shape started to unfold. All of a sudden, it came to his mind, the imposing appearance of a Dark Elf covered by the fire element that the Orcs immolate themselves with.

An audacious and rough touch by Weed.

The sculpture was finished and one by one the Dark Elves gathered around it.

“The human gave was a sculpture.”

“I thought his people disliked us, yet through affection he created a sculpture for us.”

T'tiring!

A masterpiece! An award for finishing the race of Dark Elves! To call this the work of a master sculptor is not enough!

The savage battle loving Dark Elves that sometimes reveal their presence to the outside world. Compare the soul of these aggressive rogues to the plain elves.

Artistic value: 120

Special Attributes:

Dark Elf health and Mana regeneration is increased by 3% during the day.

Movement speed increased by 25%

In addition, they are 5% faster when running.

Strength decreased by 10%. Agility increased by 20%.

Intelligence increased by 10%. Wisdom increased by 10%

Elf scouts have 1.5 times the view of the field and their skills are increased by one level higher.

Cannot stack with other sculptures.

Up to this moment, the number of masterpieces you have completed: 7

- Your proficiency in the sculpting skill has improved.
- Fame has risen by 41.
- Endurance has increased by 1.
- Intellect has increased by 1.
- Patience has increased by 3.

Now he can easily create masterpieces, but his fame and stats no longer rose so well. Now the raising of the stats depended first and foremost on the quality of the statue. The fame gained was low for the creation of a classic masterpiece and any significant increase is gone. When you make a statue with insufficient skill, the affection and care in making it can expand your stats. The patience and endurance stat when creating a giant statue that takes days and nights still grows. However, suffering to make a sculpture on a daily basis does not otherwise increase stats. Even so, as a sculptor, increasing endurance or patience could be seen as a privilege.

“Skill check: Sculpting!”

Intermediate sculpting 9 (28%): you are able to carve.

Beautiful sculptures can be sold at a higher price.

Good to buy a woman's favor.

A long time had passed since his sculpting reached Intermediate level 9. He was busy concentrating on combat and quests. As he was conducting a battle with the Orcs, he was unable to carve pieces occasionally to improve his proficiency.

“Okay. I guess I need to make a few more sculptures.”

In addition, he made the Orc sculpture. Looking wild while wielding a glaive. The Orc masterpiece sculpture increased his valor and determination. This came at a cost as his sculpting was a failure and barely tolerable.

*

KMC Media’s Director Kang was un-comparably frustrated.

It had been three days since the Hall of Fame video was released!

“We must have that contract, we need it to.....”

Just today the Director had already sent five contract offers to the email that uploaded the video.

Obviously he sent it as the representative of KMC media. Exclusive rights to reveal the quest and footage of the combat. But there still has been no answer.

“Were you unable to get the e-mails? If you don't want it, then at least send me a reply saying no. Damn it!”

Director Kang broke down in a rage.

Unicorn's privacy is very strict, requests for contact or address will never be informed to the station. So somehow, the only option available for contact is an e-mail that we cannot even see.

“Given the time in Royal Road and when the quest started, in four days' time it will have ended....”

Because of the imminent time frame, without a doubt Director Kang was restless.

On the KMC Media site the requests from viewers already reached more than 10 Million comments.

On the fifth day of the quest, the quest will get even bigger in South Korea. Although they had no live broadcast, if there is no contact they might have to cheat to get by.

*

His sister returned to school early in the morning and had a moment of free time remaining. Lee Hyun turned on the computer and connected to the internet. He first looked at the item transaction site.

The Dark Gamers invite you to the United Kingdoms.

The Dark Gamers were relentless, still sending him invitations when they already knew he joined. Lee Hyun immediately discarded the invitation and turned his attention to the prices of the items.

“Where.... did the price rise up?”

Bit by bit he collected items while he was on the Plains of Despair into an enchanted backpack that can reduce the weight and hold by 7 or 8 times. The majority of the equipment failed to sell. The transactions for the items from the village of Exiles did not gain a good price, to the point that no buyers appeared to even bid. He raised auctions to sell items in order to earn cash; the bids had to be successful. However, what is more important is the argument that no one can come to Plains of Despair to buy the items. Therefore it is common for some Dark Gamers to hunt near the larger castles. If they get items from hunting, they are always able to sell it to customers in the vicinity. However, doing it in that way, it is difficult to find good items.

'As a Dark Gamer, I guess it is inevitable that you must go.'

Dungeons near large castles were already crowded with users and the monsters were lacking due to it. You may need to go a little farther in order to hunt. So near a city with a lot of people, there is a low chance for a Dark Gamer to find things. So they could be proud just finding something to sell!

Items can become commonplace and is thus useless to sell, as many among the general public have it. When such items are actively sold, there are almost no trades for expensive items. Mainly beginner or intermediate level equipment was commonly sold, as more expensive equipment were usually bad deals. Strictly speaking, this is the difficulty that Dark Gamers see.

For a true Dark Gamer, it would be rare to see them deliberately be in the open with many people.

In Royal Road you can break a quest for the first time or be the first to enter hunting grounds and can gain experience and rewards.

Undiscovered areas and quests. Risking their own lives to enter for enemies and items. Dark Gamers were those that truly chased after money and adventure. For such a reason as to gather decent items, then the proceeds from the sale, but it really is lucrative. Lee Hyun spent several months of game time in the Plains of Despair and he was able to collect quite a lot of items. However, with the quest close at hand he is still too busy to be able to dispose of it.

“It would more costly to sell at a later time....”

The posted auction needed no reply as the item pricing was roughly fixed.

Glaive: 150,000 Won

Orc's armor: 50,000 to 100,000 Won.

Elf clothing was more than 400,000 Won.

A lot of the other stuff to sell, it is not an exaggeration to say that the price is almost fixed as well. For items he put up with a reputation, he bounced the price higher. Last time the transaction was about 3 Million Won, so Agatha's sword should be sold for 3.5 Million Won.

"500 Won, 501 Won, 502 Won...."

The auction post ascended only 1 Won at a time, it did not go easily but it passed over 3 Million Won, which was the current price. The price ascended continuously and has become close to 3.5 Million Won. But we cannot always expect such luck.

"So the normal price for the total would be 6.5 Million Won."

Lee Hyun had a bitter expression.

After 3 months of hunting in the Plains of Despair. Until the quest is finished, he could not use the teleportation gate and it would be haphazard to drop his collection of equipment. If the combined price of the items was 6.5 Million Won, it was not satisfactory.

“An income of just a bit over 2 Million Won per month. This is insufficient. Next year, Hayan will be going to college...”

When entering a college, you have tuition, textbooks, clothes; you don't know how much money goes into this.

“Also it's not easy; money is not so spread out in the Yuroki Mountains.”

Although he raised his levels and increased his fame a lot in its own way, it was especially about item acquisition. In regards to making money, selling a lot of his acquired items for a suitable price, though the fact was that most of the Orc and Dark Elf equipment he picked up did not have a high price currently.

“This quest has to be finished as soon as possible; I got to get out of the Plains of Despair.”

Lee Hyun glanced momentarily at the auction. As it turned out, the fact that it was from Weed of the Continent of Magic, thousands of comments were being added to each of his auction posts.

- This is disappointing. Where did you plunge yourself into? Update us sometime, please let us know.

- Did you join with Freya's knights on an expedition, or are you on your own? I've heard that there are many new quests originating in the northern parts.

- Tell us about the knights. How do we join?

Ever since he last sold Agatha's sword, people mistook his affiliation with the Church of Freya.

“I regained the crown and Helaine's cup; it won't matter after I register the quest into the Hall of Fame.”

Lee Hyun was muttering as he viewed the comments on the auction posts.

It seems that not enough people knew of the quests to return the sacred items of Freya that became famous to the NPC's by word of mouth. Since that's the case, this quest will leave an impression and take a considerable number of views in the Hall of Fame.

“Money, money is the best. Huhuhu.”

Lee Hyun had a dismal smile.

While posing as Orc Karichwi, he was drunk with despicable laughter and he was very familiar with the selfishness, yet it did not dwindle.

“Kuhuhuhu.”

The greed for money could not be hidden in him, he smiled as he

watched what the monitors uncovered. After a while, Lee Hyun accessed the Royal Road website and went to the Hall of Fame.

Over 15,000,000 views already. The comments reached in the hundreds of thousands. Comments ranging from questions on the quest to asking the character's profession and level.

This hot response was more than he expected. Lee Hyun was just moonlighting, even getting just a few hits, not even obtaining income, he would have left satisfied. But for him to see the number of views being like this is unusual.

“That's all right.”

Still he did not have big expectations. The length of the movie is long enough to exceed 19 hours, and it can't be seen all at once, the number of views could be due to this.

“Anyways, I don't know how much I will get from this. Later we will see the amount.”

Lee Hyun closed the window after a moment of looking at the comments. He should open his mail but he also resigned. His mail had accumulated more than ten thousand. Mail asking questions about the quest or for him to inform them more of the facts. Once he had requests to join guilds, hunts and even to the point of cell numbers. Opening the box, it will get clogged with dozens of accumulated mail and without a doubt it would be a mess to read.

Lee Hyun did not even try to open his e-mail and rose from the spot.

*

CRACK! BOOM, BANG!

The battle preparation was in full swing at the Dark Elf castle. Day by day, renovations and additional expansions for the castle were made. The Orcs were building five walls and struck 4 layers of barriers from the bottom of the mountain. It was the task of creating a battlefield on an entire mountain by dawn. Some of the Orcs who left had returned bringing back their tribes. It was a field of Orcs.

Fertility is frightening!

Although near 400,000 Orcs died in battle, around 60,000 leave and when they return, the number they bring swells to 500,000. On the road, the Orc elders spoke to Weed.

“Chwiik. Chwiik! Among Orcs it is said. Hit us and we shall not die. Chwichwit! In order to fight we bring more of us. We are Orcs!”

According to what the Orcs conveyed, nearly 1 Million Orcs assembled on the day of the decisive battle. The Dark Elves also summoned their tribes. A race that lived in dispersed groups in the Yuroki Mountains. The Dark Elves were secretive because a lot of

them were excellent assassins. Assassins with possibility to ambush those with low stamina will be helpful.

Aside from the soldiers of Rosenheim Kingdom, the necromancers and the vampires under Tori, the power on this side was formidable. Nevertheless, Weed was not so sure.

The strength of the legions of undead!

Killing, there is no end by just killing them. Purification or destroying them completely through divine magic so that they could not be resurrected even from ashes and must be discarded. If that's not the case, at such a time our army's dead would instead be revived and become our enemy. If the Dark Elves and a Million Orcs all become undead, the quest will be a complete failure.

Actually, if the situation deteriorates rapidly, it may be difficult to keep the undead legion from growing. Seeing nature of the undead, the numbers will be very difficult to kill beyond a certain limit.

“Priests, follow me.”

Weed descended the mountain with the priests. As he left the citadel, the necromancer ran out.

“Dearie, have you forgotten your promise? To slay the legions of undead, we would like to believe those words you gave.”

They were worried that he was trying to escape.

How much trust can there be when they are that anxious, though in fact Weed wanted to give up. However, it was only due to his desire of not having regrets.

“For us to be ready for battle, a lot has to be done.”

“I understand. Yet I will most certainly return.”

“I know you will come back.”

Barely listening to the necromancer, Weed parted with the group and headed into the cave in the Plains of Despair. The teleportation gate inside the cave!

“Priests, operate the teleportation gate.”

“Yes.”

Thick in their faith, the priests gathered mana and operated the teleportation gate. Weed soon disappeared with the light.

*

“Level 170 Bard wanting a party.”

“Let's go together into the forest to hunt monkeys!

“Selling inexpensive set of ice crystal armor. Bring it out when its hot, you'll stay cool.”

“Sculptor wanting a part. Let me join the party, please, please, please show me some mercy. I will never forget.”

Paat! (Grasping sound)

Someren Liberty City.

The place where Weed appeared was in the middle where people were doing business.

'Still swarming with people.'

However, it was different from before; on various occasions he noticed sculptors, painters, potters and other blue-collar characters. The pyramid that Weed made was being gossiped about. Seeing someone make something so grandiose made people thrilled. Artist professions rose en masse. However, with the scorns they received, the majority gave up early.

Sculptors were no better. Early on, it is too hard to hunt. For Weed, it was somewhat easier thanks to his harsh training that resulted in stats and skills to hunt with, but other craftsmen were weak. Also, unlike his initial thoughts, the Moonlight Sculptor profession itself was apparently very strong.

Just as he lamented that his stats had no direct relation to combat, little by little his high endurance and stamina stats increasingly shined. Yet dexterity skill greatly nurtured and raised is other production profession skills for the mercantile system. Cooking skill was now at Intermediate level 5, fishing at Intermediate level 1, smithing and sewing were at Intermediate level 2.

One cannot have a sculptor profession without the level of being a vicious laborer, and this was not counting another job. Even if you wanted to create something specific, you wouldn't know the result as it is based on luck. For such reasons, guilds only raise them strategically; but for the majority of sculptors it is still walking a road of suffering. As a sculptor like Weed, it is hard to get into a party.

He was still a young boy.

Desperation building, with a long face he was seeking a party. At the moment Weed saw the boy, tears shed as his memories of struggles in the past emerged all at once.

“It is hard work.”

From those words, the young boy looked up.

“A fellow sculptor?”

Weed nodded.

“Making sculptures is a hard thing, but there will be a day when you see the light.”

“During a period of ten days I already made ten thousand sculptures. I'm tired of even looking at a tree branch or a sculpture. Foxes and rabbits, even thousands, how much more must a make a labor?”

As with Weed, there was not a lot of information about sculpting; the young boy was going through a period of trial and error. Even if you don't come to like the boy, as a sculptor he worked uncommonly hard. As an enlightened sculptor, Weed generously gave out his knowledge of how to grow.

“Once you make something, if possible do not make it frequently. Those ten days were not enough for the stats. You made no mistake. Work on art. When the laborer has decent art, they will be able to grow. Cheer up.”

“Boohoo!”

At the end, the boy wept sadly.

“I really don't want to be a sculptor.”

“I understand how you feel.”

Weed had different kind of dealings here in the past and didn't know who might recognize him; he covered his face and quietly headed to the denomination of Freya.

In front of the church, there was a line for offerings and to receive blessings.

“Do not cut in line!”

“Stand straight in the queue.”

Users flocked to the temple due to the great crowd. Weed quietly followed the line to get in. However, the two guards with spears that guarded the church approached him.

“Huh?”

“Has he fallen deeply into sin?”

This was an unusual case, the tolerable guards that would never budge. The guards approached Weed in a hurry and spoke.

“You came. Please step this way.”

Because he piled up a lot of contribution to the Denomination of Freya, his reputation rose and reached a point that even the guards recognized him. With the guards, Weed went to see the High

Priest.

Chapter 6: Tallock's Armor

The paladins and senior priests gathered around the High Priest's altar as Weed went down on one knee in front of them.

"I have come to report on the mission."

"Is it possible that the precious duty we gave you about the Exiled people on the Plains of Despair, have you ended that thorn in our side?"

The High Priest asked him a few questions.

Weed gave them the story about the necromancers in the city of the Dark Elves.

"Oh! So that was what happened. The actions that you have taken are proper; I would have chosen the same."

The High Priest though did not understand why Weed did nothing to Necromancers.

"You have taken our request and to such a distant place and suffered for our sake, I'm unable so express all the gratitude we owe you. May the grace of the Goddess Freya be bestowed upon you."

The High Priest touched Weed lightly on the head.

You have completed:

The Exile living in the Plains of Despair.

The Necromancers did not discard their pride and self-esteem. More pressure is added to the power of darkness due to this loss, Bar Khan and the Liche Shire are no longer subject to his romantic admiration. He will fight with the Immortal Legion and do so with the courage to straighten up the wrongdoings, even the priests of the church are in wonder.

- Fame has been raised by 1,800.
 - Friendship with the Church of Freya increased by 42.
 - The public value of the Church of Freya has increased by 1900.
- You can see the public value of the church in the next window.

The Church of Freya's public value: 7,202.

The religious organization that eradicates the forces of evil, their public value has been raised from the fulfilment of the related quest.

- Faith has risen by 60.
- You have gained a level.

- You have gained a level.

- You have gained a level.

Three levels and a significant amount of public value!

Weed had nearly reached level 300, even when he obtained a considerable amount of experience, there is nothing like rising in level all at once.

Weed bowed his head deeply. Experience is one thing anyway, but of course, the most important thing was the items obtained. The High Priest then spoke.

“It is painful to say, but the wealth of our entire church is lacking, in truth, our coffers are empty.”

Truly he endured, he could barely draw a smile on his lips, but that was the most he could manage.

'Yet I immediately went out of my way just to get to the Plains of Despair for you!'

The High Priest had not yet finished speaking.

“It's just that our church is poor and does not have many treasures. Therefore, I express this so that you may not have to

expect something extremely good.”

The wealth of the Church of Freya, this was beyond his imagination.

There are many extensions of the church all over the Versailles continent. Each temple also has spacious farmlands, mines and believers that donate money. They sell potions and receive a formidable amount of donations from their blessings. A certain amount of gold is acquired from Paladins and Priests each time they hunt.

For the Church of Freya to be sitting on top of so much money, yet not having any treasure, it just doesn't make any sense.

'There must be something I can have, even just one!'

Weed currently had moment of distress.

In order to hunt, the most important thing is a sword with exceptional damage. Rosenheim Kingdom gives out a lot of swords. In addition, the weaponry from the church usually has poor damage. The Sword of Agatha, that he previously received from the church, even had an ability to exert a special Divine ability, but the sword itself still had a weak attack.

'Also will need to pick body armor with a good defense.'

Armor of the Church.

Various kinds of sanctification have been imbued through magic into the armor; you can boast of it being exceptional. Weed raised his patience and endurance to a great degree by beating superior monsters, but for other people ignorant of this, it is not like that. They are unwilling to fight stronger monsters with high attack and increasingly searched to obtain good armor.

Swords and armor have always been higher priced items.

After Weed organized his thoughts, he spoke.

“To defend my body from enemies, I would like some armor.”

“In return, you will get what you wish.”

The High Priest instructed a paladin to bring Tallock's armor.

'Tallock's armor?'

Weed was hard at work racking his brain.

His head did indeed contain the information on numerous items. Almost all the various kinds of items worth money, he also memorized the names of items that were tolerably worth something.

Something like Tallock's armor was unfamiliar to Weed.

A moment later, the paladin returned carrying armor over a red cloth.

A white armor with a subtle radiance that made it like new. In addition, the red pattern that was needle stitched was indeed of Freya. At the moment Weed saw the armor, his eyes were sparkling! He was very intrigued.

'It looks expensive!'

He had not checked the information of the item yet; however, the glossy appearance is not ordinary. Wearing that around the plaza will certainly receive peoples' attention right away. Traditionally, the appearance and rarity of an item greatly affects the price. If a luxury goods market exists, such an item would fit in that class. So the value could be higher. One passing point was the perfect appearance in itself.

“Your contributions have been meaningful to us I pass on to you Tallock's armor. I hope that you will cherish this gift. “

“This is what I needed to fight monsters. This armor passed on to me from the Church of Freya, I will never forget this grace and will conserve it as I would my own body.”

Just to say there was need for suitable flattery, he was trembling!

Weed promptly took the armor into his own hands. He felt

conscious of the heavy weight.

“Identify!”

The Armor of Tallock's faith

Durability 150/150.

Defense 85.

A armor made from the mithril of the Rahoman Mine. The dwarven blacksmith Tallock, who was renowned throughout the continent, made this armor to repay a favor to the church of Freya. It boasts amazing defensive capabilities and is light in weight. It gives the wearer a fighting spirit that will not waver and a noble tenacity.

The gift of the High Priest.

This is the only one of its kind.

Restrictions:

Level 350.

Strength 600.

Attributes:

Faith +100.

Fame +300.

Strength +40.

Agility +30.

Charm +25.

Fighting spirit +40.

Maximum mana will be increased by 15%

Magical damage reduced by 10%

You are immune to confusion and fear magic.

Acquired the Dwarves favor.

Due to the properties of the mithril that came from Rahoman Mine, it turns to a black sheen when underground.

Immediately, Weed's jaw dropped the moment he viewed the information of the item. For some time his mouth stayed in that state.

A unique class of item!

With a variety of attributes, the defense was almost of the highest class.

If using the blacksmith skill to polish armor, with a 20% additional effect to defense, it would be more than 100.

'Jackpot!'

The item was very good, except that his level was still too low to wear it. Weed rapidly packed away Tallock's armor and spoke. His business at the Church of Freya's altar was not complete.

“High Priest! The Liche Shire and his Immortal Legion, they are powerful and my force and Dark Elves are still lacking despite my efforts to strengthen them. So, for that reason I formally request that you send a contingent of the order's knights and priests.”

A request for reinforcements!

Even the Church of Freya would not have any expectations that those that were borrowed would necessarily return to Rosenheim Kingdom. Looking at the necromancer Shire's forces, it is indeed powerful. Even if weakened, Bar Khan can still draw the power of over 5000 Doom Knights over level 300. Doom Scouts, Doom Servants, Doom Wizards!

Archers of the living dead, ghouls, zombies, remnants, and all kinds of undead skeletons, grouped together and lead by various

stronger monsters.

The priest spoke with a sad face.

“For something like that you will require a lot of strength. However, in our Church's order, we have no such force. We devoted all of our strength to the province of Mora in order to stabilize the region. No matter how critical it is to go against the Immortal Legion at this moment, we will not be able to discard the choice we already made.”

In this matter, the request of reinforcements he made has been refused. It was inevitable, paladins and priest would not have been enough. But the High Priest did not send Weed away just yet.

“At all costs, can you stop the Immortal Legions on the Plains of Despair?”

“I will do my best.”

“In order to help, the church will lend you our sacred item, Helaine's cup.”

The cup of Helaine.

The treasure that Weed gave at the beginning which created; this bond with the Church of Freya. When water is placed into the cup, the relic will change it into holy water.

“Originally, it is only reserved for the clergy as only they are able to handle Helaine's cup. By the grace of the Goddess Freya, our benefactor may make use of it. With this you should go on to do very great things. As you are currently busy with the mission, at any time you are finished, you know where you can find us.”

Weed accepted the cup of Helaine and headed to the teleportation gate into the Plains of Despair.

*

Someuren Liberty city, people were still lining up to receive the blessings of the Church of Freya.

“Just a little while back, just who was that person that the guards took with them?”

“For the lowly guards at the entrance to escort him, must be some kind of big figure with influence or made a great contribution.”

“Donate big bucks to the church and you might be one.”

“Ah, that can't be the case. When I looked, he was wearing some shabby clothes, close to a beggar.”

“Yeah.”

The bored people that were standing in the line stood and chatted. Suddenly the guards stepped up to them and the people were tense. It was very rare for the guards to come out like this, especially so frequently. Not just that, the guards also spoke to them.

- You people, do you know of the adventurer called Weed? Now, this is probably something you should know. This time he departed for the Nercomancers on Plains of Despair, with no guide to tell him the proper path.

- Passing through the greedy and dirty Orcs and the selfish Dark Elves, he met with the Necromancers.

- He did something that no one else would do, with his benevolent heart, he listened to the Necromancers and spared their lives, and thus he learned of a more important affair.

- Now, Weed is the great benefactor of our Church.

The people were surprised as they quietly listened to the dialogue of the guards. As they heard the guards speak, something emerged for them.

“The Hall of Fame. The quest seen in the Hall of Fame has just been reported of, right now!”

“It was a quest from the Church of Freya.”

“Then, that man who was just in front of us all, the one who went through.....”

“It was him, the man who progressed through the quest.”

“But his name was Weed.”

“No way, is it just a similar name?”

“Surely no. War with the Immortal Legion. Following the defeat of the True Blood Vampire clan, it must be a serial quest!”

“Weed! From The Continent of Magic, it is that Weed!”

The people started a fuss.

Others knew the name of Weed; even in this game he was legendary. People remembered the incident of Weed combating the True Blood Vampires for the Church of Freya.

“But did anyone memorize the face of that person?”

“I don't know.”

“Did no one see that guy's face?”

“He was gone so fast....”

“It was because his attire was so mediocre.”

“Wait. We will camp out here and wait until he comes out!”

In Someuren Liberty city, all the residents, the soldiers and the priests, the word went out of Weed's story. As the rumors spread, an immense crowd stood in the line in front of the Church of Freya.

However, Weed had already taken the teleportation gate and was away into the Plains of Despair.

*

Holy water seems to have a lethal effect to the undead.

Helaine's cup can produce an infinite amount of holy water; it had been lent to him, but he was unsure if this alone could stop the legions of undead.

“It can weaken the enemy, but this won't win it for us.”

Weed concluded that in sober judgment.

The best class to kill an undead would be a Paladin. He was short

on priests too, just barely having 100 of them. They lacked the mana to give blessings to all of the Orcs; it would be difficult to just walk to them.

When they get close, it will be almost impossible to defeat the undead without priests or paladins.

“I need weapons. The Orcs and Dark Elves will need to be armed with weapons.”

A quest of ‘A’ class difficulty would not be so easy.

Orcs holding their glaives, and Dark Elves and their arrows would not be very effective with the undead.

Nevertheless, what he could do is prohibited and is no different than a mistake. He knew that this job was too difficult to continue if he didn't use an absurd amount of money in answer.

“Silver! Nonetheless, we need weapons made of silver!”

Silver defeats evil!

If the Orcs and Dark Elves were armed with weapons made of silver, their allied power will practically increase more than two times. But if he bought the weapons and still fail the quest, Weed will end up broke.

“This is why I wanted to abandon the quest.....”

Weed decided with tears in his eyes.

“An investment. Must take a risk or I won’t obtain a greater return.”

Weed sent a whisper to Mapan.

- Mapan. Are you currently available?

A merchant has access at any time!

As soon as he sent a whisper to Mapan, an answer is returned.

- Yes. Choose! Choose! Buy goods cheaply. If you want affordable items, we can purchase on your behalf. We also buy japtem! Could you please leave your contact information? Thank you for visiting Mapan's firm. We will serve you kindly.

-

*

The tearfully ascetic road of a merchant!

He still purchased japtem, and Mapan was intent on selling

goods. In fact, until a certain point when you reach the top of the scale you still crave for money. Most traders would fall off such a path. But Mapan was persistently dedicated to his merchant skills. He followed Weed and the Geomchis while using flattery as he walked the merchant's path.

'Even though my funds may leave me, my skills will never betray me!'

Mastering his skills, Mapan had the belief that the effort of improving the merchant skill will let him live a comfortable life. Yet in the meantime, it seemed that there was a lot Mapan had to develop. To the extent of his intonation while he speaks to, even his way of humming.

- Oh! Is that you Weed?

Mapan sent a whisper straight back.

The guy knew Weed was the sender but he was surprised as he belatedly spoke back.

- Yes. It's me, Weed.

- You're still alive. *sob*

-

Tears poured out from Mapan unexpectedly.

This time Weed's colleague assumed that he was dead.

So far no one had ever known of a person return from the Plains of Despair alive. In addition, the quest was of B-class difficulty and leaving for that alone should have left him to his death.

Mapan had bet 200 gold that Weed would die. Pale and his other companions had all bet money that he would survive. They had a solid belief that with Weed's vitality he would somehow live. Mapan thus lost money but he quickly smiled and whispered back.

- Anyways, I'm glad that you're alive. Pale was also very worried. Zephyr, Hwaryeong, Irene, Surka and Romune have all been talking about you, Weed.

- Where is everyone gathering at right now?

- Ah yeah. Besides myself, they are hunting at the Lake of Elementals which is conveniently lucrative and gives quite a bit of experience.

Weed's party was hunting without him.

- How are the Geomchis doing?

- Oh! Each of them left Rosenheim Kingdom talking about

training as warriors. For the sake of becoming great adventurers in the end they were instructed to break up individually.

- Training as a warrior... that would be fun.

Traveling troublemakers!

The Geomchis traveling all over, you can't imagine what they will do, for Weed it was not difficult to make a guess.

Mapan could not help but laugh as he told him.

- You seem to be getting along well on the Plains of Despair, anyway I'm glad. The quest, are you still doing it, have you resolved it yet?

- As you can expect, I'm managing. By the way, I'd like to make a little purchase of weapons for the progression of the quest. Sterling silver, I will need a lot of it smelted.

- Oh, if I go to the blacksmith's shop, I should be able to buy silver and other materials. Silver by itself will not be that difficult.

A large kingdom being in the frontier, like Rosenheim, would normally stockpile weapons and materials.

- Then find and purchase some please.

- Sure. Although you need all that silver for those zombies, will you pay me through Pale-nim or directly, will it be during the shape of the battle with those undead monsters? How many would you like? Weed, as with the original preparations for a hunt, will you need 5,000 maybe even to the extent of 10,000?

It depended on the quality of materials, but that made little difference, one arrow would usually use 2 silver coins.

It was hard to imagine Weed needing a large amount, so the ignorant Mapan heavily assumed that it was for hunting. From his calculations he considered that the total would be a generous 200 gold. However, what Weed told him next was beyond anything he imagined.

- Two Million arrows. First purchase as much of the ingredients for smelting as cheap as you can. So that at least 50,000 weapons could be cast.

-

For a moment, there was no answer from Mapan.

He was eagerly hard at work on the calculations.

Gather 100 silver for 1 gold. If it is 2 silver per arrow and he bought 2 Million, that's 40,000 gold!

No matter how cheap he bought the materials, to cast one

weapon would cost at least 60 silver. First off, using the cheapest, even if only doing the lightest covering of silver on 50,000 weapons, it would be an unbelievable 30,000 gold.

- T, that's so much....

- Can you get it?

- 2,000,000 arrows. Enough sterling silver to cast 50,000 weapons. What the hell is happening over there... All right. I'll get started on this right now!

After entrusting Mapan to the purchasing of weapon materials on his behalf, Weed did not have to worry about a thing.

There is a limit to the amount of material that is sold from a shop, but up to this moment, Mapan had learned important lessons from advice given by Weed.

From the beginning, there is nothing that can't be done.

If there is no way, then make one.

Think on how to strive. Money never just comes to you.

Get up earlier than anyone else to earn a copper more.

In the future, earn more money than can be done now.

To fill the sheer amount, he would have to purchase from many blacksmith shops in the Kingdom of Rosenheim every morning and buy from users that obtained silver through hunting. Sterling silver as in silver arrows exert a lethal effect on undead; but for those who do not hunt or look for undead, they turn over such items that they do not need much of. There are not a lot of people in the Central continent, let alone the rare few in Rosenheim Kingdom that would bother to scour cemeteries. To purchase such extraordinary amounts that would be normal for an industrious reason is strange but not impossible.

'My entire fortune is gone, decreased by 75,000 gold.'

This money wasted, never to be seen again, Weed wanted to lament in his pain.

Ordering these weapon materials, he had to pay more than 70,000 gold at the very least.

Truly the saddest moment!

Weed had to quickly recover his motivation.

“Yes, money! When you start off, there is no money, but this is not how it has to end!”

He never spent money so casually and suffered so badly. Rather,

this was too big a shock. Shedding tears profusely, he made an effort to try to forget about the money. At a time when a friend fell and broke his knee, he shed no tears. But when he bought land, his tears gushed out with such force.

“But even with this, it will not be enough!”

It was still lacking for Weed. His throat was dry.

In the Plains of Despair, there was still another force that can follow him. The Village of the Exiled. Scattered throughout the Plains of Despair, but the Dark Elves and Orcs alone are not sufficient. Humans, should they join, the battle ahead will be eased by quite a bit.

“I will obtain the silver weapons from Rosenheim Kingdom, but I have to go there and back.”

Weed pulled out Zahab's carving knife.

Soon after, Weed picked out a rock of good quality without any cracks and sat in front of it for a moment to think.

“Perhaps running, a Cheetah would be a great choice for that right?”

A sleek cheetah!

If disguised as a cheetah, he should be able to pass through the Plains of Despair by running. Also, he already had the map.

Syasyasak! (sound effect for carving)

With his skill, he very nimbly carved through the rock and carved a cheetah. He elongated the torso, and most importantly, lengthened the four legs like that of a horse.

“Should be able to run faster with longer legs.”

It should run well, just like the fact that a child will not run as well as a tall adult can!

T'tiring!

A fine piece! A reward for completing a quadruped animal!

Sculptor, you are approaching towards greatness! Your fame is enough to be widespread throughout the continent. It is not necessary for art to have a fixed form! This is certainly an age where you can experience any kind of art at any moment. However, in accordance to the development of art, various attempts were deployed. As this artwork is made with an abstract impression, to people with a good eye this may be seen as superior but not all will consider this as a work of art.

Artistic value: 3,100.

Special attributes:

This beast is awarded 25% increase in health and mana regeneration during the day.

Movement speed increased by 20%.

Prior stats are raised by 10.

You will see that 9 random attributes will be applied.

Can activate Roar of the Beast.

Overlap with other sculptures does not apply.

Until now, the number of completed fine pieces: 4 (could also be classic)

- Your proficiency in the sculpting skill has improved.
- Fame has increased by 320.
- All stats have risen by 6.
- Patience has risen by 3.
- Endurance increased by 2.
- In response, Weed will have ownership of this beast. If you give life to this beast in the future, it will be loyal to Weed.
- In consideration of making a masterpiece sculpture, all stats will have an additional rise of 1.

An abstract!

In accordance to the development of the arts!

A created work that really meant that Weed's beast statue was

tacky. In fact, it actually had the long legs of a horse and a long torso, but he was trying to create a cheetah. The reward was for an unknown beast. The cheetah's body hair was closer to that of a camel. It had the posture of a cow stepping backward and crushing a frog.

It was rough, but intentionally trying to create a masterpiece does not come so easily. Because of this, his sculpting skill rose by 12% and he reached level 9 and was at 43%.

“Anyways, it's a masterpiece so that's alright.”

Weed was greatly satisfied.

An outstanding sculptor would be confident of himself and might obsess over his work. However, Weed was more interested in what the work lead up to.

Traditional art will be like this. You wouldn't know what the history was like if you didn't live in that time. As with the abstract art of Picasso, how would you know what he wanted from his paintings?

A great musician might make a mistake and that music may become the masterpiece of the century. Depending on your own point of view, the interpretation of art is different.

“Although it may be like this now, how it may be considered 100 years from now, it is possible that the work of a beggar can become

recognized as superior art. If not in 100 years, maybe 300, no perhaps about 10,000 from now.”

Roughly Weed ended his self-justification of the skill he used when he looked at the beast.

“Sculpture shapeshift!”

You have used Sculpture Shapeshifting.

The boundless affection for the sculptor and his engraving, the sculpture and him are changed to resemble one another! Weed's body became covered with hair and his arms and legs became thin and long. A human with two arms and legs soon finished transforming into an animal similar to a camel running on all fours.

- Many of the changes in the body shape have caused the worn equipment to become unusable. Leather clothes can be especially made to be worn. Depending on the species or form, obtaining new equipment may be required.

- The impact of Sculpture Shapeshifting has increased your agility and endurance. Charisma and Leadership has fallen to the lowest level. The Art stat is reduced by half. Endurance will rise dramatically. This will remain valid until Sculpture Shapeshift skill is released.

The endurance of a quadruped is also greatly increased.

“Okay, I'll run to the Village of the Exiled”

Weed dropped to the ground and started going at a sprint

“Quadrupedal run!”

Quadrupedal run: a moving skill.

Using stamina and mana, you can run at a speed nearly 60% more than that of being on two legs.

In addition, when running against the wind, stamina consumption is increased by 30%. When running downwind, speed is increased by a rate of 20%. Skill cannot be used in hilly and mountainous terrains, plus when in grassland or plains, you gain an additional movement speed of 80%.

In the past he had to act for another sculpting skill, where he had to understand what he sculpted. At first the skill seemed useless.

Weed's paw moved forward. Then the hind foot soon came up.

Tatatatak!

Weed's running speed utilized the Quadrupedal run!

Each step went by quickly as he stepped forward on the plains landscape. This type of running was not at all familiar to an ordinary human. The paw and hind legs move forward and back simultaneously to the point that you forget the fact that you moved the paw itself.

Left front paw, right hind foot, paws and hind legs. Furthermore, his forelimbs and hind limbs made ridiculous wobbly clicks. Walking as a four-legged beast is surprisingly complicated. First stride, the left paw and right hind foot went, and then right front paw and left hind foot moved. Unless with the appropriate intervals, balance and strength otherwise the action will not be sleek and break apart.

It was hard but weed followed these actions from deers and horses with his own body and acquired the Quadrupedal running skill.

Tatatak.

Weed processed his speed into a gallop. At first everything seemed to be going well; but soon a big problem came up.

“Unbelievable....”

He did not take into account that this was trial and error. Weed was a big human. To learn how to run as a quadruped, he was like a toddler! To run at a fast pace, but when you think of running for several days when in an infant stage, it can't be done.

“It can't be; this is such hard work!”

At first, he thought he could do what he saw. It was vicious, he could not run!

His throat was aching. The scenery was going too fast for him to see in front of him as well as what he was running over. Running for a long time, his soles were hurting.

- You have hit a sharp boulder health decreased by 3.
- You have stepped on a piece of metal health decreased by 10.

He had managed to tolerate the side effects thus far. With blacksmith skills, a little bit of the shock can be reduced because of horseshoes. The problem was stamina.

For animals like a cheetah or a horse, the endurance was not so outstanding. The top speed may be very fast but the time maintaining that speed was very short. The remainder of the time was being idle and drinking water or standing about.

- Your stamina has fallen, you can run no further.

It had only been 10 minutes!

The time taken to go at full speed. He had to move slowly on all fours while wandering to rest. Every time he walked, his hips swayed and he had shortness in breath. Hardly nothing else to do, Weed finally stopped in place.

“HufHuf! This is not what I expected.”

Running across the Plains of Despair was tricky and frustrating. Although you can be quick at times, when your stamina drops, this is the answer.

“Sculpture shapeshifting off!”

Weed made another sculpture he can Sculpture shapeshift into again.

An animal that runs on two legs, like the ostrich!

He did not even attempt such a thing. This was the time to create a modest choice, like the form of an Orc.

Karrchwi's body consists of a plain Orc with enlarged musculature, and using the same existing form, he made a leaner version of an Orc into a sculpture. He did not bother spoiling it with looks and focused on keeping it skinny to keep only the necessary muscles. It was reasonable to reduce the weight as much as possible.

The end piece looked like a little red pepper. Undoubtedly it was only the impression of Orc Karichwi. Just from looking at his face you could see that it is upset every time of the day, and when its eyes encounter something in the world it had the look that it wanted to break it.

Weed had the talent to make the ugliest Orcs around.

T'tiring!

A masterpiece! You have been rewarded for completing a little Orc monster.

A work from a young great sculptor in anguish! A masterpiece of the century, made from tons of frustration and agony! This object could not be any more uglier, but somewhere in the gloomy atmosphere you can feel that there are hidden secrets.

Artistic value: 1

Special attributes:

From gazing at the statue, Orc health and mana regeneration is increased by 5% during the day.

Movement speed increased by 18%

Intellect decreased by 20. Attractiveness decreased by 100.

Strength increased by 10. Agility increased by 5.

Can stop the cries of a crying child.

Those with a low nerve that view the sculpture will become severely weakened.

Overlap with other sculptures does not apply.

Special attributes:

From gazing at the statue, Orc health and mana regeneration is increased by 5% during the day.

Movement speed increased by 18%

Intellect decreased by 20. Attractiveness decreased by 100.

Strength increased by 10. Agility increased by 5.

Can stop the cries of a crying child.

Those with a low nerve that view the sculpture will become severely weakened.

Overlap with other sculptures does not apply.

Until now, the number of completed masterpieces: 9

- Fame increased by 80.
- Endurance has increased by 2.
- Intellect has increased by 1.
- Fighting spirit has increased by 1.

Weed immediately cast the skill once the sculpture was completed.

“Sculpture Shapeshift!”

His height and face shrunk as changed to a small Orc Karichwi. His hair grew longer and his body became scrawnier and drier than before.

Many of the changes in the body shape have caused the worn equipment to become unusable. You can wear plate armor.

Depending on the species or form, obtaining new equipment may be required.

The impact of the Sculpture Shapeshift has increased your Agility and Endurance. Intellect and Wisdom will fall to the lowest level. The Art stat will be reduced by half. Endurance will rise dramatically. This will remain valid until the Sculpture Shapeshift is released.

“Chwiik!”

Small Orc Karichi.

As expected, simple is best.

Not requiring art or any other values, ignorant is convenient.

As he staggered, Weed diligently began to run across the Plains of Despair.

Chapter 7: Past Ties

King Zet, the third king in Belsos La Deus dynasty, has disappeared from all books of Bersa continent.

But then, by a stroke of luck, members of Crimson Wings found a short reference to him in one of the private libraries.

“Looks like there might be some secret associated with him.”

“Maybe. Let’s find out more.”

And since then the guild members started to investigate it. They were asking aware of history NPCs and looking for any mentions of that king or the times he lived in.

Though they didn’t have high expectations, everything was pointing at some high-level quest.

During his searches, one of the guild members reached the distant Mersel kingdom, where he got an audience with Count Kresse, a stingy and very intelligent schemer, which entrusted his guest with a mission:

“King Belsos had many treasures. And the most valuable among them was Black Flute, created from a horn. If you find it and bring it to me, I’ll reward you handsomely. But make sure, that only trustworthy people know about this deal.”

Ding!

New quest : Shadow of the returned King.

The great king, whose rule once spanned over many lands, is now sleeping in the dark below. There was time, when his power was absolute and now his tomb is filled with gold, silver and rare magical items. But even then, there wasn't anyone brave enough, who would dare to approach it.

If you find the horn flute in his tomb and bring it to Count Kress, you will get a generous reward.

Difficulty: A.

Reward: Treasures from the King's tomb.

Restrictions: No magic may be used inside the ruins.

Usually players were acquiring quests by finding something unusual during hunt or by talking to certain NPC. Most of them were requests to find some ingredients, protect something or clear a monster-infested area.

However, thanks to luck and long investigation, Crimson Wings guild managed to find a hidden 'A' rank difficulty quest.

“Yes! This is the Royal Tomb ruins!”

They found the location of the ruins and even the map of its interior. The guild was celebrating their triumph, not forgetting to carefully guard their secret.

“So what if Hermes guild has BadRay? If we complete this quest we will be able to change everything!”

Teros, leader of the Crimson Wing guild, was making a speech for his guildmates.

At the start of the game guilds were appearing everywhere like mushrooms after a rain. But by now the situation has stabilized and the main competition was going on among the few dozen biggest and strongest guilds.

But soon all this was going to change. Guilds became big enough to claim control over entire kingdoms, which meant that times of quiet rivalry were coming to an end.

That was why it was important to gain as much power as possible before the new confrontation begins. The power was based on rare items, high levels and influential allies, and all of this was provided by difficult quests.

The Crimson Wings guild gathered all of their high-level players, 200 players of levels over 330, and hired 50 players of levels over 350 from the Dark Gamers Union.

The result was an extremely powerful squad of 250 people. And if they were to fail, Crimson Wings will lose 60% of its strength for full 4 days of Royal Road time. In this case other guilds might use their weakness to try to capture their castles.

That was why members of Crimson Wings were taking all possible measures to prevent any information from leaking. They did hire players from outside the guild, but none of them knew where and, more importantly, when they were going.

At the appointed day they gathered at the abandoned ruins, hidden in the center of bersa Continent.

“We’ll dig up the entrance to the ruins. As you all know, this quest is ‘A’ rank difficulty. Be careful not to die, every death will be a huge loss for our guild. Gale.”

“Yes, guildmaster.”

“You will lead the search party.”

“Yes! Leave it to me.”

Gale was very proud to be assigned to such an important task as scouting.

The search party consisted of a few dozens thieves, whose task was to detect traps and monsters along the path of the main forces, led by the guild master himself.

They started to slowly explore the area. Step by step, players were combing one part of the ruins after another. Thieves were going in front, followed by warriors, with priests in the back row.

Even though the latter couldn't use healing spells because of the quest's restrictions, they could still provide a helping hand in critical situation or drag the wounded soldiers out of danger.

“Be careful!”

“Don't miss anything!”

The ruins were inhabited by dangerous monsters with sharp claws and filled with numerous cleverly hidden traps. Those traps were placed just a few meters from each other and were connected in such a way, that even player of level 300, who accidentally activated one of them would be lying dead a few moments later.

If such traps were installed in ordinary dungeons there would be very few players, willing to go into them. Besides, monsters in the ruins had a pretty high level and weren't easy to deal with.

A great part of hired Dark Gamers, who had to go in the front line and scout the way, died on traps. By now the guild had only lost 30 people.

“We can’t give up! Our losses are indeed great, but if we retreat now, everything we did today will be lost and our companions’ deaths will be in vain.”

Teros was encouraging the remaining players and they were continuing to steadily advance into the ruins despite the losses. Some of the Dark gamers would prefer to leave this place, but they were bound by contract. Besides they were promised increased payment in case of death.

When the players reached the internal part of the ruins, they couldn’t hold their surprise. The entrance to the Royal Ruins was blocked by seemingly new, and therefore obviously enchanted doors with an image of red scorpion and some inscriptions in an unknown language on them.

In front of the doors was a small stone altar.

“Can anyone read the inscription on the doors?”

To answer the Teros’s question mages and priests approached the doors. Former knew various ancient languages, latter - holy symbols. But the symbols on the door didn’t seem to belong to any of those.

Fortunately, one of the best mages of Crimson Wings, Shavron recognized them.

“Those are letters of Varon.”

“And how are they different from the mages’ languages?”

“They come from the runic alphabet. But they were used by shamans rather than mages.”

“That’s right. So to provide some encryption some characters were a bit deformed. I learned it just in case and didn’t think it’ll ever be useful.”

“Come on, read them.”

Shavron started carefully interpreting the symbols on the doors.

“The entrance to the Royal Tomb will open for the one who will show true respect. His entire life King loved and revered scorpions, and only the one who will bring 7 scorpion figurines will be able to open the doors and enter the tomb.”

That must be why altar in front of the tomb had 7 small pedestals with 7 red gems.

“Figurines?”

All the members of the squad were confused.

Like everyone else, Teros got stunned for a while, but he quickly recovered and sent a guild-wide message, meant not only for those participating in the mission, but for the rest of the guild members, spread across the continent and kingdoms, too.

“Sculptor. Find a sculptor, who can create scorpion figurines!”

*

On a warm and sunny morning a group of players left Seraburg through eastern gates.

“Wow! Cool!”

“Look, they have Pluto and even Haisyns...”

“And their leader is Oberon!”

“Great! They must be going to the Plains of Despair again.”

Players, hunting around Seraburg couldn't hold their admiration. Participating in such a dangerous adventure was the limit of their dreams at the moment.

“I'm jealous! When will we be able to go on a journey like that?”

“Not anytime soon. Let’s go, we have a lot of hunting to do if we want to raise our levels and be able to join them. They only accept players from level 250.”

“Eh, really?! Maybe there’re a lot of people like that in central kingdoms, but in our they’re less than one in a hundred.”

“That’s why they’re elite.”

The party, that caused such an excitement, headed along the road. They marched in unison, nodding proudly to encountered players, who were looking at them with admiration and reverence.

Soon the party reached the eastern border of the kingdom and their leader gave an order to stop.

“You already did so in the city, but I’ll ask you again to check your weapons and equipment.”

Following his own order, Oberon sat on the ground and started to check his equipment.

Usually the party leader position was occupied by a warrior with high leadership attribute. Fighting under the command of such a player, everyone was receiving a bit more experience and a slight stat increase.

As the hunt in Plains of Despair was very difficult, the most experienced and renowned warrior was selected to lead it, Oberon.

“All good.”

“I finished preparations.”

After waiting for every member of the party to report, Oberon nodded approvingly and commanded to move out.

On the eastern border of Rosenheim Kingdom a high wall was built, that was blocking the way of monsters, living on the other side. And to pass into Plains of Despair one had to climb up the stairs to the top of the wall and carefully descend the small hidden ladder on the other side.

“Wow! There’s a place like this...”

“Yeah, spectacular view.”

The players, who joined this hunting party for the first time, glowed with delight.

However Oberon, Pluto and Haisyns only smiled slightly.

“Let’s go. Wait a bit and you’ll see something even more breathtaking...”

These three were the most experienced in the party, they has left the Kingdom before for over five times and already knew what was waiting ahead.

The party just descended and moved a bit away from the wall, when they were attacked by a pack of wolves. Soulless Wolves with levels just below 200, and number just over a hundred were quickly approaching the players.

Calmly looking at the wolves, Oberon was giving orders.

“What’re you standing for?! This is just the beginning! Mages, attack!”

“Fireball!”

“Wind blades!”

“Blessing!”

Some of the 30 members of the party immediately started to cast one spell after another. Multiple elemental spells were directed at the wolves, burning, cutting and exploding many monsters at a time.

“Guaaaaaaah!”

The commander yelled at the top of his lungs. This shout was

similar to Lion's Roar, but instead of Fighting Spirit it was raising Vitality and Stamina of nearby players.

“Mages, aim at the ones on the sides and in the distance!, Warriors, attack!”

All the warriors and paladins gripped their swords and maces and rushed into fight, with Oberon in the lead.

“They're poisonous. Be careful, don't let them bite you! Each of you should watch your Health and Mana and retreat to mages and priests when needed. If you die, that'll be your own fault.”

Oberon continued giving orders.

The dangerous fight has started. Monsters were coming from all sides. Warriors were trying to not let any of them near mages and not die from their sudden attacks at the same time. Maces and swords were striking wolves' bodies with deadly force, priests were shouting healing prayers, mages were casting spells repeatedly. For the next several minutes the party was repelling one attack after another.

Finally, when the number of wolves dropped by more than a half, monsters, as if following some order, rushed back and disappeared as suddenly as they appeared before.

“Hurray! Victory!” - were cheering some of the newcomers.

“What will come next if we just entered the Plains of Despair and already encountered such monsters?” - were asking others.

However there was no answer. Oberon just calmly looked at them and said:

“Thanks for the good work. We’ll take a short break for mages to restore their Mana.”

After a fervent battle, the party settled to rest near the recent battlefield. Some players went to gather the loot, left after the wolves’ death.

“What do we do with hides?”

“yeah, and meat and teeth?”

The players, who came here for the first time were looking at their more experienced companions, who were sitting on the ground, talking leisurely.

“If you take them, they might become a burden later.” - said Pluto.

“True. hides, teeth and the rest aren’t worth much. take it all if you want.” - confirmed Oberon.

However there weren’t any players willing to collect the loot

after his words, and the ones who already gathered some, threw it out under approving gazes of more experienced players.

“There must be something valuable waiting ahead of us and this junk will only take up place.”

After a short break the party packed up and headed further into Plains of Despair.

“Be alert, you might already understand what’s waiting us ahead. Cover each other and then no one will die.”

The party only moved some 100 meters away from their resting place, when a black dot appeared in the distance. It was gradually growing and approaching the party with great speed!

First it was discovered by archers, who had the sharpest eyesight.

“Monsters!”

“Take positions. Monsters approaching!”

Like the last time, players quickly formed a battle formation, hiding mages and priests behind warriors’ backs. Mages prepared their spells, priests renewed blessings, thieves unsheathed their daggers and hid on the sides of the party. Everyone was ready for an ambush.

Finally the growing dot approached close enough to identify it.

“What?.. That’s an Orc!”

“A very thin Orc...”

A small, all skin and bone Orc, dressed in some torn and dusty rags was quickly approaching the party.

“Chwiik!”

Tap-tap-tap...

“Chwiik!”

Every three steps he was making loud abrupt noises, covering the constant clanging of tree huge backpacks on his back.

“There weren’t any Orcs in this area before...”

“But where did this one come from then?”

“And what’s he carrying?”

It looked like this tiny Orc suddenly decided to go on a journey or move to a new place with all his belongings.

No one in the party has ever heard about anything like this. While they were standing there in confusion, guessing what was going on, Orc came close enough to see his face.

He looked very tired, but at the same time he had extreme determination in his eyes.

“Chwiiiik!”

He shouted twice as loud as before and then passed the party in a wide arc, not slowing down for a second. And though no one knew why he was doing it, all of them sympathized with him, seeing how hard it is to make every step for him, like there was a mountain on his shoulders.

And then Orc’s eye suddenly brightened up and he rushed to the place where the party left their loot a while ago! He ran to that place and started to scurry all around it.

“What’s he doing?”

“Beats me. He’s weird.”

“Looks like he’s gone crazy.”

The party members were still standing and staring at the strange Orc. And he was still rummaging through the former battlefield,

and wherever he was passing, all items were disappearing. With his right hand he was grabbing teeth and hideas, with left - wolves' meat.

Suddenly his eyes sparkled even brighter, like those of a jackal who found food for the first time in 10 days. He found 3 silver coins!

“Chwi-i-ik!”

After grabbing the unexpected money, Orc continued to run towards Rosenheim kingdom, laughing with satisfaction.

*

“Almost there.” - quietly muttered Weed.

Of course that Orc was him.

After turning into small Karichwi he ran across Plains of Despair. But first he visited the closest to the mountains villages of exiles.

After a little persuasion, absolutely all of them agreed to take part in the battle against the army of undead.

“We don't like Orcs, but if undead win, no one will survive. We will join the battle to defend our new homeland.” - said the blacksmith in the first village before gathering as much warriors as

possible and departing to the Yuroki Mountains.

It then repeated in other villages in a similar manner.

Generally it wasn't hard to persuade them to fight against the undead, the main problem was traveling. Villages were scattered all over Plains of Despair and he had to visit each of them.

‘Tired like a dog...’

Weed, who was running at the top of his speed all this time, was under a heavy stress. Even for a trained by heavy manual labour human, this would be a hard challenge, and Weed has turned into a small Orc. Besides he had a huge weight on his back, consisting of backpacks with his items and a small, but heavy Orc statue. Because of all that, he couldn't feel his legs any more.

Though the first few days went relatively good. He was still at full strength and running was actually pretty entertaining. He had to avoid the dangerous monsters at all costs! Such a race with death was very exciting for Weed.

The Plains of Despair were among the top 10 most dangerous regions of the game, that had barely any information about them. No one knew what monsters inhabit them, how many or where their lairs are.

But Weed had a map of this land.

The map had precisely marked villages and dangerous areas, that must be avoided. And moreover - information about each of them!

Weed was just passing the dangerous areas along the edge and continuing to run along his way. Therefore, though his journey took a long time, it was absolutely safe.

On the other hand, those who didn't have such knowledge, were sooner or later walking into a wrong place and dying in battle. And that was why these lands were rumored to be very dangerous.

But even though he knew the way, he had limited time. The battle against undead was going to start in 20 days, and during that time he had to complete all preparations and return.

When he was still at full strength he was running on all fours. The skinny orc Karichwi, running like the wind through the dangerous Plains of Despair.

Full 24 hours a day Weed was under a constant tension, as he had to watch for occasional wandering monsters. He was even eating on the run. As a result he ran out of stamina and got sick.

You are exhausted.

Strength left you because you haven't rested for a long time.

Your Stamina, Strength and Agility attributes are reduced.

You are suggested to rest. If you don't do it, you may lose consciousness because of exhaustion.

To collapse from exhaustion and wait for death by some monster's claws. What could be more ridiculous? He would probably be the first player in Royal Road to die because of exhaustion.

After reading this message Weed was furious.

“So I wasn't working hard enough until now?!”

All this time he thought that he was working at the limit of his ability. And now he got such a message! At this moment he remembered his entire time in Royal Road and regret over all the possibilities he missed filled him and he screamed.

“A-a-a-a-a-ah!”

And then the rain came pouring down.

It was so strong, as if some god made a hole in the sky and all the water in the world was flowing through it now. It was raining heavily all across Plains of Despair. Dry soil was greedily absorbing the water. Withered grass started to fill with life.

And Weed kept running.

At first it wasn't troubling him at all, on the contrary, cold water was only cooling down his overheating body!

But however long he was running, the rain didn't stop.

And that's when he had a second nervous breakdown.

"A-a-ah! A-a-a-ah! A-a-a-a-argh!"

The rain went on for 3 days and 3 nights. The ground was covered with mud puddles and water streams, that obstructed the path like small rivers.

Weed had to make great efforts to avoid them. Unfortunately, he was alone on this journey and there would be no one to help him, were he to make any critical mistake.

The Plains turned to one big muddy swamp, which made it very hard to travel through for a short-legged Orc. And the most unpleasant part was that he couldn't stop to rest because of constant heavy rain.

The weather in Royal Road was known to have very quick and drastic changes. many Royal Road websites even had discussion groups, that were trying to figure out weather patterns and make a forecast.

But Weed was passing through a barely explored region. And of course the map was of no help here.

“Winter... I hate winter! Chwiik! Summer too...Hate summer. Spring and autumn - those are the best.” - was muttering he on the go.

Weed had already fallen down many times, but every time he was getting back on his feet and continue walking.

The rain was going on and on, and he was gradually losing his strength. He got a fever too.

“Just exhaustion. Nothing wrong with that.” - he was trying to convince himself.

The time was running out and he had to hurry. But such disregard of his body didn't pass without consequences. His speed dropped even more, backpacks' weight seemed to increase even more. He got dark circles under his eyes and his face turned a pale shade of blue instead of green.

You are severely exhausted.

The Stamina recovery has stopped.

Health is gradually reducing.

To prevent collapsing from exhaustion you are strongly advised to rest.

Weed couldn't allow himself to collapse in the middle of flooded plains. He searched his bags a little and started to chew one healing herb after another. He was doing everything he could to sustain his tired body in a working condition.

In such manner, constantly urging himself, he reached the Rosenheim Kingdom in 6 days. Or, more precisely, on 7th day he saw the walls of Seraburg.

“Cancel Sculpture Transformation!”

After shouting that he fell to his knees, but already in his human body.

It was a miracle, that he managed to reach Seraburg without dying. Crossing the plains of Despair was the most dangerous thing he did since he started to play Royal Road. Not because they were filled with dangerous monsters, but because he nearly died from exhaustion.

After transforming back into human, Weed sat on the ground for a while staring into the void. His body finally got to relax and he wasn't able to make himself move again.

Meanwhile players were passing by him on their way to and from the city. And most of them, especially girls, couldn't just ignore

him!

“Cheer up...”

“Live, uncle. Do not give up hope!”

“ ... ”

One small coin after another were falling to the ground in front of Weed. And hearing such a sweet tingling of money, he would never admit that he's not a beggar. So he was quietly scooping them into a small pile.

‘3 silver and 14 coppers.’

There were times, back when he was in school, when he didn't have anything to eat. Almost all of the small monthly allowance, paid by the government, he was spending on his little sister. So he often had to eat expired food. For someone who experience such things, every coin was a fortune.

“Uh-oh...”

Weed finally forced himself to get up. His body was still fatigued and legs trembling.

That was one of those moments when he felt that Royal Road is made just too well. He was tired not only physically, but mentally

as well. Running for seven days straight wasn't something just anyone could do.

And if he wasn't using the four-legged running, it would take even more time.

Weed shook his head and slowly headed towards the city walls. He agreed to meet with Mapan at the fountain on central square.

Lately Rosenheim Kingdom had a lot more players, than before. Now its population wasn't much lower than that of central kingdoms.

Other frontier kingdoms as well noticed that population of Rosenheim was growing. And of course the cause was the giant statue of a Sphynx. It not only had restorative effects, it was raising various attributes too. Besides the nearby monsters became a lot easier to hunt.

Of course, this situation wasn't going to hold for long.

‘When other kingdoms get their own sculptors, painters and other artists, players will disperse once again.’

Because of the Sphynx sculpture many players were choosing a profession of a sculptor. And with time more and more Fine pieces and Masterpieces will be appearing in other kingdoms, and then Rosenheim will lose its advantage.

“Weed! I’m here.”

Deep in thoughts, Weed didn’t notice that he got to the central square, where he was met by Mapan. He was waving his hand, trying to get his friend’s attention.

“Wow! It’s been a long time. Here, I got what you asked for.”

Like a true merchant, Mapan has already prepared everything.

“Two million silver arrows, some weapons and enough silver to smelt into the rest of required 60 000 weapons.”

That was 10 wagons worth of goods.

“I tried to get it as cheap as possible. In the end I got everything for 65 000 gold. I know we agreed on 70 000, but you can pay the actual price. Want me to put it on your tab?” - carefully finished Mapan.

To be honest, he was grateful to Weed, because he introduced him to Pale’s party and Geomchis, which really helped him to earn some extra money. Besides this deal helped him to raise his trading skills quite a bit.

So he was expecting that he’ll have to make a discount for such a big deal, or at least postpone the payment.

However Weed shook his head.

“70 thousand. I’ll pay in cash.”

“Woah! Really?”

Mapan knew, that Weed is secretly a money bag, but didn’t expect him to be THAT rich! But then it hit him and he started to worry. This was his old friend Weed, that wouldn’t move a finger without a good reason.

And like he expected, Weed continued:

“But only after you deliver it to the place. At your destination I’ll pay you the full ammount.”

“...”

Mapan sighed with relief.

He still considered himself lucky. He would still be the one, responsible for delivery, as there would be no way Weed would be able to move the goods, occupying 10 carts.

“So where should i deliver it?”

“To the Plains of Despair.”

“ ... ”

“Yurokin Mountains to be precise.”

“ ... ”

“And it should be done in 10 days.”

“Damn!”

Saying that Mapan was angry would be an understatement! He was about to blow up in Weed's face, when he passed Mapan his trump card. The map of Plains of Despair! With it anyone will be able to avoid the dangerous areas and reach the destination by following a safe route.

And Mapan didn't have a choice but to agree. Besides...

‘Villages of exiles... This is my chance to boost my trading skills!’

By making good deals in settlements, which haven't been visited yet by other merchants, Mapan will be able to receive a lot of experience and make a lot of money.

Fame and wealth captured his imagination.

“Excuse me. Then i need to hurry.”

After bidding his farewell to Weed Mapan hurriedly checked the carts and immediately left towards Plains of Despair.

Weed decided to take another route. Traveling through portal had certain restrictions concerning the maximum load that could be carried through, so it didn't fit his needs. Besides, he still had to visit remaining villages of exiles. Therefore, after quickly visiting some stores and completing his preparations he went to the stables, where he bought a horse, on which he headed to the city gates.

*

The main square of Seraburg suddenly lighted up by a bright flash of a portal, through which two players stepped into the Seraburg.

A beauty, dressed in red, and a bald monk.

“So you say there's a sculptor here?” - asked monk his companion in a calm voice.

“Yes. Don't you read any forums? There was a huge uproar about the construction of that sculpture...”

“Hmpf! Like I don't have anything better to do. The fact that we had to come to this hole of a kingdom is enough! If it wasn't for

this damn quest...”

“Ha-ha. Calm down. Soon we’ll finish it, get inside, and you’ll get what you want.”

Psyche and Mako were walking around the city, talking to each other. Psyche was a girl in a gorgeous red velvet robe, and Mako was a monk, wrapped in bright yellow ceremonial clothes.

“Hmmm... Those people...”

“A witch and a saint.”

“What are they doing in Rosenheim?”

Here and there people started to loudly discuss them. These two players from the Hall of Fame of Royal Road were widely known in the game.

Psyche and Mako, who were used to such reaction weren’t paying any attention. And though they weren’t showing their power, every player who was looking at them got an impression that there’s nothing they cannot do.

“Psyche, you remember that game we used to play?”

“Huh?”

“I wonder what that guy is doing now.”

“Mako, you’re talking about that guy, Weed, again?”

“Yeah. About that bastard. He was the only one to get ahead of me and humiliate me.”

A lot of best players of Continent of Magic were playing royal Road now. And most of them were looking for Weed.

Not so long ago, the old and dusty secrets of Continent of Magic were being discovered because of Weed. He was always hunting alone in the most dangerous locations of the game, and his fame was absolute.

Mako and Psyche, like many others, were zealously following his footsteps. Many times they watched from his hunt from a distance, and they saw, that however ridiculous that seemed, he was fighting, like his life was at stake.

When he was entering dungeons, he was slaying every monster inside. He was extremely violent and efficient when he was fighting the most dangerous monsters in the game. Players, that were following him were trembling in excitement, seeing how every strike takes one life.

Back then Weed was considered the most dangerous and most successful player, that never gives up, but always keeps going ahead, fighting and winning. That’s why everyone called him the

Dark Knight.

Psyche and Mako reached the east gates.

“According to our information, the sculptor was last seen around here.”

“That’s him!”

Psyche pointed at Weed, who was riding a horse.

After going through so much trouble in the past 7 days, Weed decided that the way back he’ll spend with comfort.

Plains of Despair had small herds of wild horses, but only players of certain professions, like Knights or Mercenaries, were able to tame them. They could even make horses run faster.

But Sculptors didn’t have any abilities related to horses. Though even druids could use ‘Wolf Spirit’ and bards - their singing. But sculptors...

‘Profession, that thrives only through hard work.’

Only after crossing Plains of Despair, Weed seemed to truly understand the Sculptor profession.

‘Hya! Let’s see how fast you can run!’

He was about to send his horse into a gallop, when two players blocked his road. A woman in red robe and a bald monk. Not giving him any time to express his anger, woman asked:

“Are you the sculptor?”

“Yeah... That’s my profession, and what is it you want from me?” - warily asked Weed.

He didn’t like unnecessary complications and he didn’t have time for them.

Psyche smiled slightly and continued.

“That means I was right. It was you, who built the pyramid. Could you by any chance make us scorpion figurines, uncle?”

“I’m afraid not. It seems you purchased some figurines from me before, but unfortunately I don’t make any more souvenirs.”

Weed didn’t have enough time to spend it for a couple silver coins, so he decided to lie. Some extra profit was always welcome, but right now he had an important quest waiting for him, with hopefully great reward.

“But we have an emergency. We need those figurines right now.

Could you please help us?”

“I’m sorry, but that’s impossible. Ask another sculptor.”

Weed refused abruptly, showing that he’s not going to continue this conversation.

But Psyche, seeing that the situation is developing in a wrong direction, handed him a small gem.

“We already talked to other sculptors. They say, that we need a Sculptor with an intermediate skill level. Only such a sculptor will be able to carve us the necessary figurines.”

Unfortunately for Weed, the situation was getting more and more complicated, it was obvious that they’re not going to let him go easily.

“My skill level isn’t that great, besides I’m in a hurry.”

“We know, that it’s a difficult request. So if you agree to help us, you’ll get this gem as a reward.”

Shiny red ruby got Weed’s complete attention. He already had experience of working with gems and he easily estimated its value.

‘I could sell it for 400 gold. Or even 500 if i put enough effort.’

The regret over spending 70 000 gold was only strengthening his usual greed.

Weed quickly got off the horse, smiled brightly and said:

“If you give me a little time, I’ll make them right now. You can count on me!”

Psyche and Mako were looking at each other in confusion.

The moment they mentioned a gem, the sculptor’s attitude completely changed! He was even looking younger! They never before seen such behaviour in the game.

“We need seven figurines. Can you start right now?”

“Hmm... seven?”

“Is that too many?”

Psyche looked at him, a bit worried. Weed answered her with a sad look.

“As you know, I’m an artist. I admire art, that’s why I became a sculptor. Even when working on similar figurines, I have to make a lot of effort to maintain their originality, I have to use special techniques.”

Weed was saying that with crystal clear eyes of the most honest man in the world. From the side he looked like a most moral player, who devoted his life to art. Weed, who had a lot of experience in such matters, became an incredible actor.

“Oh! I haven’t thought about it. In this case, if you make us the figurines, we’ll add another gem to your reward. Can you make them from this material?”

Psyche took out seven red stones. At that moment she was warily examining the surroundings.

The monk has put his hand on the sword handle. If they noticed any suspicious movements, they’d immediately get rid of the sculptor.

But Weed was only looking at stones.

‘To cut them, one indeed needs an intermediate skill level. With Zahab’s knife I’ll be able to work with them easily.’

No wonder, that other sculptors refused the job, messing with gemstones of these two with just beginner skill level was very dangerous.

“Sure, I can. Wait a bit. I’ll make you best scorpions in the world.”

Weed relaxed, but kept the appearance of extreme focus, and

started working. Usually there were many curious players gathering to watch him, but this time Psyche and mako were repelling any unwanted attention.

“Hey, Mako...”

“What, Psyche?”

“Do you think he might be playing this game too? Weed, I mean.”

Skillfully moving hands of the sculptor froze for a moment, before continuing work, like nothing happened. It was unlikely, that in this huge world someone was talking about him! Them must be talking about someone with a similar name.

“Hmmm. Most probably. I heard, that he sold his account in Continent of magic and moved here. There are rumors, that he’s not only playing this game, but became a paladin of Order of Freya. Of course you shouldn’t trust it much, but...”

“What, did he realize his mistakes and decided to follow the path of light? That Dark Knight, that was destroying everything in his path, like a death machine?!”

Weed’s hands started to tremble slightly. He sneaked a look at their faces.

Mako added in a low voice:

“I want to meet him so much...”

“I know, Mako. When you started playing this game 2 years ago, you was only regretting not killing Weed in Continent of magic.”

“Yeah... I wanted to best the one who was considered the strongest by everyone else.”

“I understand you. Everyone, who achieved anything significant in Continent of Magic must have had that feeling.”

“You bet! To beat the one on the top. To take his position and make him suffer. If he’s here, I wish I could meet him. No, I will definitely meet him! The continent is big, but our paths will definitely cross someday.”

“And what will you do when you meet him?”

“Oh, I’ll happily greet him. It’ll be such a joy. Ho-ho-ho!”

Psyche gave him a wry smile.

“Those are my thoughts exactly. When I meet him I’ll happily welcome him.”

“Right. We should kill him at least a thousand times.”

Weed's hands were moving so fast, that they were barely visible. Only Zahab's knife was flashing from time to time.

"Sculptor, there's no need to hurry that much..."

"No..."

Weed finished the figurines as fast as possible and showed them to Psyche.

"You did a great job."

She nodded with satisfaction, handed him the promised reward and turned to her companion.

"We can finally return."

"Yeah, let's hurry."

Mako and Psyche said goodbyes to the sculptor, turned around and walked away.

When they were far enough, Weed sighed with relief.

'Phew! I really shouldn't tell anyone, that I have played Continent of Magic.'

As big was his fame, as strong was the hate, others felt towards him. After all he was dealing with everyone who ever attacked him with no mercy.

He has heard of Psyche and Mako before. But thanks to virtual reality, he was able to see faces of people, who might become his worst enemies in the future.

Chapter 8: Strange Companion

Once Weed finished his business in Rosenheim Kingdom, he headed into the Plains of Despair again.

Though, this time he was riding a horse. It was a cheap common breed, known for its short stature, short and muscular legs and good endurance.

People, who wanted to make an impression, were usually picking a horse of pure black or white color. But Weed certainly wasn't one of them, so he chose a simple brown one.

“Okay. Let's go. Come on, run!”

Loudly hitting the ground with its hooves, the horse broke into a gallop.

In rocky or swampy areas it wouldn't be the best means of transportation, but on the plains, across which Weed was traveling, it was unrivaled.

“Yeah. It's worth the money.”

He was enjoying the fast and comfortable journey.

Now Weed could understand why other people were buying

horses. But he still was bitter about spending those money! So he had to constantly comfort himself about it.

“Right investments is the only way to success.”

Though he only spent 3 gold on it, he had to constantly praise his new purchase to not feel regret. He was doing everything to suppress his greedy nature.

But whatever was his reasons for praise, the horse really was a worth investment, as it allowed him to travel a lot faster than even when he was using Quadruped Run skill.

In a single day he reached the border and passed into the Plains of Despair, then he changed direction and started to move in a strange pattern. Plains had passable terrain and great visibility in every direction, but Weed was riding to south-east for an hour, then making a sharp turn and riding another hour to north-east.

Making such zigzags, he was gradually making his way to the east, towards the fortress of Dark Elves, though he had to spend his valuable time on meaningless wandering.

A few hours later Weed encountered a party, that was hunting on the Plains again. Oberon and his companions just finished another fight and were resting. Of course they were alert and noticed the approaching rider first.

“What in the world...”

“There’re solo players, who come here!”

Everyone in Oberon’s party turned around and looked at Weed in surprise.

When they entered the Plains of Despair, they had to fight monsters almost non-stop. If in Rosenheim Kingdom they could brag that they can deal with any monster, here it was different. They’ve got to feel what real battle is the hard way.

Abyss Knights, Lightning Casters, Poison Lords, Dark Dancers, Night Lords! And many other monsters of level 350, that were setting traps, making ambushes, casting deadly spells and summoning minions to aid them in battle.

These lands were a real challenge for their party. A couple times when they encountered monsters of level over 400 it was only by their tremendous effort that their hunt didn’t end at that moment. With every day the mood in the party was getting gloomier and gloomier.

So it was no wonder, that the moment Oberon saw Weed, his eyes took a perfectly round shape.

“It is dangerous here. This is Plains of Despair... Hurry up, turn around and get away from here as fast as you can! Or no, we better escort you back.”

Oberon was a really noble man. He was ready to defend others even when he was being attacked himself. The warrior profession was often picked by such open, good-mannered and kind people.

But Weed wasn't anywhere near that kind of guy. It could be said, that he was an exact opposite.

Weed just rode past them. He totally ignored the players, but not the items, left by them, like on their previous meeting!

He didn't even get off the horse to pick them up, he just bent over to gather them into his saddlebag, holding on the horse only by his legs.

‘I must gather everything.’

Having picked up the items, Weed continued his way to the east.

“Huh? He just left?”

“Does he not value his life?”

Players from the hunting party were watching him ride away.

“Everyone is free to choose his own way to die.”

“Really, there are people who like to travel alone everywhere.”

However Pluto, Oberon, Haisyns and a couple other veterans weren't so quick with conclusions. Weed's behaviour wasn't that of a person, who was going to die in near future.

A few thoughts flashed in Oberon's mind. He remembered how they encountered Soulless Wolves right after passing the border, and how they saw a strange Orc, that picked up all the items, left after the fight.

“Could it be...”

Pluto looked at Oberon.

“That Orc!”

“So it was a player?”

“If that was a player, then...”

They nodded to each other.

“The player, who can turn into an Orc... Only one person comes to mind.”

Now others understood as well what exactly Oberon was implying. After all this hunting party consisted of high level players, very passionate about Royal Road.

“Hall of Fame!”

“The Orc from that video!”

“He looked different this time, but that’s him! The same terrible face.”

“Right. There are no Orcs in the game as ugly as this one!”

“So that event is going to happen in Plains of Despair!”

*

Though this time Weed was traveling on a horse, his mood wasn’t quite as good as it should have been. On his way he was noticing traces of the hunting party, or, to be precise, items, left by them.

Weed could see them clearly, but couldn’t come close enough to pick them up. There were strong monsters living in those areas, that would be hard to deal with alone. Besides, hunting party was coming through the middle of such areas, where the number of monsters was the greatest.

At first glance plains looked like they were empty, but that was a misleading first impression. Every kind of monsters had its own territory, by walking into which players were forcing all of the

monsters inhabiting it to attack. These territories were scattered around the plains, forming a complex labyrinth.

Weed had a copy of the map, therefore he was able to avoid all the dangerous areas. But even with that map and a horse, he had to follow a tortuous path, which was really slowing him down.

After a day of constant gallop the horse started to foam at the corners of its mouth. It was getting exhausted. Especially since Weed was carrying a pretty weighty Orc statue in one of his bags.

Usually horse owners were taking care of their rides: stroking, comforting, feeding carrots to them, and of course letting them rest when they were tired.

Weed was rushing his horse instead.

“Come on, run. You can do it. You belong to a species of runners after all, aren’t you disappointed, that you never actually reached your limit?”

After that he suddenly started to thump out a tempo on the horse’s back. And it did start running a bit faster, expending the little power it still had. But after some time the speed started to drop again.

“It’s hard, isn’t it? Hold on a bit more. When we arrive you’ll be able to rest as much as you want.”

The horse believed those words, stopped slowing down and put some more effort into it.

Weed's kind voice and his high charisma and leadership attributes were helping him to convince the poor horse to run ahead in hopes of reaching their destination.

But however long it was running, there was no sign of their destination and Weed wasn't letting it to slow down.

"Come on, a little further."

The horse was running.

"Almost there."

It was still believing.

"Just a bit left."

Weed's attitude towards his mount went beyond horrible. He was squeezing every last drop from his horse.

In the end it couldn't stand such a treatment any longer, made last few steps and fell to the ground, completely exhausted.

After examining the heavily breathing horse and realizing, that

he won't be able to ride it any further, Weed took his bags off it and said:

“You're free now. Go wherever you want. Good luck.”

He took out the small Orc statue. He didn't have time to wait for the horse to recover, so he switched to his original way of traveling.

“Sculpture transformation!”

The journey to Rosenheim Kingdom took him 7 days. But now, that he covered a significant part of his way on the horse and saved his strength, this time was going to reduce by half.

“Chwiik! Chwik!”

The small Orc headed to the east.

He still was terribly short on time. last time he visited all the villages of exiles in the center of the plains, now he had to visit as many of the remote ones as possible.

Taking into account the way back to the fortress of Dark Elves, it was going to take about 12 days.

“And I have 15 days until the battle starts.”

Having concluded, that he has just enough time, Weed was continuing to run, when all of a sudden, he noticed someone standing on a hill. The person was standing with his back to Weed and looking at something out of Weed's field of view.

“A player? How... It's not easy to get here. That must be some villager. Chwiit!”

Villages of exiles were scattered all around the plains. And despite the abundance of monsters, they were full of life, villagers were hunting and going out of villages for other business. It was not unusual to meet one of them here.

“Chwiik, is there a village nearby?”

As he was coming closer he was noticing more details about the person on the hill. Graceful posture, waist-long hair.

‘That must be a woman.’

Though he could only see her back, his sculptor's senses were telling him, that she must be very beautiful. A woman watching the sunset. No, a young lady.

Deciding that it was not his business, Weed continued to run. The girl could obviously hear him, but wasn't paying him any attention, so he decided to simply run past her.

While running up the hill, Weed noticed something at the edge of

his field of view. A huge bull-like monster was running in the same direction.

“Hunter of Plains!”

That was one of the few kinds of monsters, that didn't live on some set territory. Hunters of Plains were roaming all over the Plains of Despair, hunting people or even occasional monsters.

Villagers said that they were warriors of about 320th level, who got cursed by a dark spell and turned into monsters with large health pool and an unpleasant ability to reduce player's vitality a bit with every hit.

That last feature made them incredibly hard to fight against.

Weed prepared for a hard battle.

“Damn. I didn't even sharpen the sword or polish the armor...”

He was focused on running, so he didn't prepare for a fight at all. And the difference between fighting after preparations and fighting unprepared was huge.

If he encountered the monster on plain terrain, he'd be able to go around the monster. But on a slope he noticed it too late and there was no way to avoid a fight.

However Hunter of Plains wasn't going for Weed, but for the girl, standing on the top of the hill!

It was hunting her.

'Great. I'll escape in the meanwhile... Oh, no, I can't run away!'

At first Weed got relieved and was going to use the opportunity to escape, but then he remembered another trait of that kind of monsters. Hunters of Plains were always chasing their prey to the end.

Once it finishes the girl, it'll follow Weed until it catches up with him. And that'll most probably happen when Weed will be tired, which will make fighting with it even harder.

So his best bet would be to deal with it now. Besides this monster had a certain weak point.

'While it's busy with the girl, I'll come from behind and stab it.'

The Hunter aimed his spear at the girl.

Weed got a better grip on the glaive. He was counting on making a single powerful strike, that'll most likely be lethal.

He thought he planned for every possibility. But in the last moment the girl turned around with incredible speed and

unsheathed her sword! The blade flashed and seemingly divided into 3 separate edges, which immediately struck the Hunter, that was about to thrust his spear forward.

The next moment the monster was dead.

The girl looked at Weed.

When their eyes met Weed got stunned.

He knew her.

Knew her well!

That was Seoyoon.

“Chwi, chwiik...”

He froze with a glaive lifted in a striking position. From the side it looked like an ugly small Orc was going to attack a lone girl.

*

After leaving Rosenheim Kingdom Seoyoon went on a long journey, that ended in Plains of Despair.

in the game she was a Berserk, which allowed her to master all

kinds of weapons. However her real power was showing when fights were dragging on for some time. Players with that profession were never getting tired and instead were getting stronger when they saw their opponents bleed.

Seoyoon was fighting like a machine, as any real Berserk should. No matter day or night, she was restlessly hunting and slaying one monster after another, leaving only dead bodies behind.

Sometimes, during her journey she was getting stranded in the center of some dungeon and getting killed as a result. Even a player like her, who was fighting non-stop since the launch of Royal Road couldn't win against such an overwhelming number of opponents.

But that wasn't disturbing her. Losing levels and skill levels was insignificant. All the more so, as she preferred fighting monsters to bothering with her skills.

However she wasn't able to play for 24 hours after death, so she was trying not to die. She tried to win in all the fights.

Though, that wasn't the main point either. She only needed battles to let out the accumulated frustration! To take revenge!

And monsters wouldn't find even a spark of compassion in her cold eyes.

‘Enemy.’

Seoyoon noticed the Orc, that was approaching her with glaive in his hands and looked straight at him.

She didn't relax for a single moment, as new fight could start any moment now. The sword in her hand turned towards a new target.

*

Seoyoon.

Having recognized her, Weed froze in place.

Beautiful. He already saw her before, but now that he met her again he couldn't avert his gaze, her beauty struck him too hard.

‘A human can't be this beautiful...’

It seemed like her face was shining. Eyes, mouth, nose - everything was in harmony, filling her face with incredible charm.

After seeing Seoyoon so close, Weed felt despair. He created so many sculptures, but none of them reflected her beauty properly.

If it was possible, he'd look at her like this all day. He would never get tired of it.

But right now wasn't the best time for that. He had to get away

from here, until something terrible happens.

If he's discovered to be the player, who created a sculpture of her without permission, he may end up like the Hunter of Plains.

However strong Weed considered himself, Seoyoon had a pretty high level even on their first meeting. And all the items she was wearing were above level 300!

‘Trouble.’

Besides the situation was very delicate. Orc with a glaive was assaulting a lone girl.

Weed swallowed. Of course, he'll just explain it to her and clear the situation.

“Chwi, Chwiik!”

Weed was hurried and agitated, but all that came out of his mouth were meaningless orcish sounds!

“Chwichik...”

“Chwi-i-i-it!”

Every time he tried to say something he was spitting in Seoyoon's

direction instead!

And then he felt some sinister aura coming out of Seoyoon's body. Like if she was already slicing him in pieces in her mind. It was making his body numb and his knees tremble. Something menacing and oppressing.

The breath of death!

That overwhelming pressure made Weed think that he'll die even if he explains himself. But he couldn't at least try. He must tell her, that he's that guy she once shared a meal with in the instructor's house.

Though even that fact might not stop her. Even the most beautiful rose has thorns. After all she already had a red mark of player-killer on their first meeting.

She was the first Player-Killer Weed met in Royal Road.

'Who would think, that in Plains of Despair I will meet the person I never expected to meet again.'

Since that memorable meeting at the table the image of that beautiful but cold girl was imprinted in his memory. Every time Weed was creating a new sculpture, he was trying to give her face different expressions in his imagination. He tried to fill this cold angel with a living beauty.

“Chwiik!”

Weed opened his eyes wide and looked forcefully at Seoyoon.

If his opponent is a murderer, the fact that he was a player too may only encourage her to attack. But it may prevent her from attacking as well.

‘Can I defeat her?’

Even if he gives it his all, he’s still significantly behind her in levels and equipment quality. At first sight, judging by her items, he was behind by about 70 levels.

‘A few months ago BadRay had level 370. Now he should be around 390. Though her level was slightly lower, she was still among the top players!’

Weed wasn’t afraid of players with higher level than his. He was compensating the difference with his crafting skills, heightened attributes and Sculpture Mastery!

But for him, who started to play to earn money, worst enemies were Player-Killers.

They were bandits.

While ordinary players, like Weed, participate in hard quests and

battles to acquire items, those murderers train to fight against players. And in the end they were killing other players and taking all their items!

Though he already had experience of encountering Dwichigi quartet, which ended in his victory, that case was very different.

Seoyoon was going to be a tough opponent.

She went through the same training in training hall he did, so he couldn't rely on raised attributes much. And he wasn't able to use his secret advantage, blade sharpening and armor polishing. Besides a fighting profession, like hers, must have some unknown to him skills too.

He didn't see any way out!

However, Weed put even more intensity into his glare. He must show that it's exactly opposite situation! That he's at least of the same strength as her, if not stronger! And then use any chance to get away!

Weed already prepared 36 different escape scenarios.

But then Seoyoon simply lowered her sword, turned around and continued on her way.

Weed couldn't understand what just happened. How would he know, that Seoyoon only fought monsters, that attacked her first!

In his eyes she didn't see any threat, so she didn't do anything to him.

Confused Weed quickly came to his senses.

‘Anyway, I don't have time for this.’

He continued to run towards Yuroki Mountains.

But Seoyoon was moving too. And, surprisingly, they were going in the same general direction. Therefore a few days later their paths crossed again.

At first Weed couldn't understand how did that happen. He was running as fast as he could for 2 days straight, but Seoyoon was slightly ahead of him anyway.

But then he realized. He had to avoid all the monsters and their territories, while visiting exile villages at the same time.

Of course his path was much longer and more difficult. Unlike him Seoyoon was walking straight, fighting all the monsters on her way!

“Chwi, chwiik!”

Weed was hurt.

He was putting all his efforts into running, but they still were moving with an equal speed! And Seoyoon was simultaneously hunting monsters and receiving experience and items.

The third time they met at the Yunopu Canyon. Since that moment they had to travel together. Seoyoon wasn't paying any attention to the Orc, that was following her, she was just following her way.

Yunopu Canyon was located in the northern part of Plains of Despair. Two twin mountains were attracting travelers, like a giant pair of doors. Besides the canyon between them, the only way to get to the other side would be going around them or climbing over, which would be even more difficult.

“I don't have much time, chwiik!”

Weed decided to go through the Yunopu Canyon.

He was a bit worried about having to follow Seoyoon, so he decided to keep some distance to avoid danger. Or monsters, to be precise.

This area was inhabited by giant Yetis. They had thick white fur, that made them immune to ice magic. Besides they had level 340!

They used to live in mountains, but were driven out by other even more powerful monsters, so they moved into the canyon, that happened to be a popular route for hunters in Plains of Despair.

“Can’t help it! Will have to fight with Yetis.”

Weed decided to go through the canyon and was now watching Seoyoon demonstrate her outstanding sword mastery on occasion Yetis.

“She’s strong...”

While running through Plains of Despair, Weed was avoiding most of the monsters, but in Yunopu Canyon he had to confront Yetis. He had to fight!

Even with his crafting skills, every fight required all of his skill. During fights his health was dropping to critical level, but for now Weed was winning them.

It seemed, that fighting didn’t require any effort for Seoyoon. Using her techniques, with incredible grace she was killing several Yetis at a time.

Of course she had higher level and better equipment, but Weed noticed something else. Skill.

Royal road was a game, set in virtual reality. Here no matter how high was one’s level of skills and abilities, only by using them effectively was one able to realize the full potential of his profession.

It can be demonstrated on a duel between a monk and a swordsman, two most popular among players professions. The player with a sword would try to keep his opponent at a certain distance during the duel, while monk on the contrary will try to approach as close, as possible.

If their skills are on equal level, the outcome of the duel will depend from their tactics, reaction and a bit from luck. And in this case the fighter with most experience and skill will most likely win.

Of course, that wasn't as important during monster hunt, though newbies, who didn't want to learn at all, could be killed even by weakest monsters.

However, even experienced fighters didn't have a single chance against Weed, who spent an entire year on learning swordsmanship.

‘Nice moves.’

Weed was admiring Seoyoon's sword skill.

Her technique wasn't as organized, as his own. Weed's swordsmanship didn't have any weaknesses. He was correctly using all his muscles, concentrating his strength on defence or sudden offence.

Sometimes Weed was getting carried away and rushing into

battle, completely forgetting about defence. Relying only on his agility and reaction, showing incredible feats, he was raining strikes on his enemies, defeating them sooner or later.

But Seoyoon was fighting in a different manner. She was thinking about defence and offence at the same time. When she saw a weakness - she was attacking, when in danger - defending.

Of course, she developed that tactics during multiple battles against monsters, which was why her skill will eventually reach the limit. But Weed was envying her anyway. In the battle she looked like she was dancing. Because of her agility, she was able to make strikes only a woman could do.

When the situation allowed it, Weed was watching the girl's actions with full attention.

‘She likes to hunt!’

Though during this entire time she didn't say a single word and was always fighting with the same cold expression. It looked, like it was telling that these terrifying monsters aren't a competition for her.

But Weed saw something else.

Deep inside her beautiful cold face was hidden sadness. Some burden on her heart.

Since their first meeting, while creating sculptures, Weed was often thinking about her inner world. He didn't have much experience in understanding people back then and didn't see much.

Now he could understand people's feelings better and was able to see those hidden feelings.

‘Why is she so sad?’

Weed tried to take even closer look at her.

Though he was captivated by her secret, just watching her was no less pleasant. He never before saw a girl of such beauty, that he couldn't capture in a sculpture even after so many tries.

While watching her, Weed noticed something else.

Seoyoon was never aiming at the opponent's head. Though Yetis were higher than 2 meters, while the girl was about 1.67 meter, with a sword she would be able to hit it anyway.

Weed would definitely aim for the head, as it was the least protected part and hitting it would likely be a critical strike.

But Seoyoon was never hitting the face. It looked like she wasn't even looking at their faces. He was just using all the techniques, available to her to kill her opponents as fast as possible.

‘She doesn’t look at their expressions? Maybe she’s afraid to see their pain... No, there’s most likely some other reason.’

Because Weed was following Seoyoon, he didn’t have to fight much. He was mostly fighting the few enemies, who tried to attack the girl from behind.

“Chwiik, experience!”

Yeti hides was a top grade item and costed a lot. Besides their fur looked very impressive and clothes made from it were very warm.

“Chwichichichit!”

‘If I pick it all up - I can forget about cold. I’ll sew clothes and even earn some extra money.’

Weed got absorbed into hunting and gathering hides.

“ ... ”

Seoyoon was continuing to fight and paid no attention to her unexpected companion. It’s just that when she was turning around now, she was always noticing a small Orc behind her.

She still didn’t say a word, and Weed considered it natural. He didn’t hear her talk before as well. Besides even ordinary players

wouldn't talk to him now that he was transformed into Karichwi.

Though at first he was worried a bit about following her, Weed quickly realized, that she won't attack him. It became clear after he watched her for some time and saw, that she was trying to avoid fighting Yetis, who had offsprings.

‘How did she became a murderer? And she doesn't have to walk around with such a cold expression then.’

Weed was very curious, but as he didn't like others intruding his personal life, he was trying not to intrude others'. So the only thing left for him was hunting and gathering loot, while traveling through the Yunopu Canyon. The canyon didn't have any turns or crossroads or other paths, only one straight and very long road. And it would take 4 more days to pass it according to the map.

Half a day later Seoyoon made a stop to rest. She took out a stale barley bread, which she stocked up with back at Rosenheim Kingdom and started to chew it slowly.

Weed respected Seoyoon for that.

“Yeah, to reduce expenses one should start with the food. If you do that, you can accumulate good money. Money is power. One should constantly save up, then he will never run out.”

But unlike the girl, Weed wasn't eating only barley bread.

Because of his high cooking skill, he was able to gather ingredients during hunt and then, with a bit of spices, cook himself tasty and almost free meals. Which didn't only satisfy his hunger, but boosted his attributes.

Weed lighted a fire, threaded Yeti meat on wooden sticks and started to slowly roast it over the fire. The tasty aroma of roasted meat gradually spread around him.

“Chwiik!”

When it was ready, Weed grabbed one of the sticks with both hands and started to eat. The thin Orc was eating with great appetite.

Your Satiety increases.

Stamina increased by 40%

Health increased by 15%

You ate flesh of Yeti, who have great strength.

As a result your strength has been slightly increased for a certain period.

Intermediate cooking skill!

Some people use precise timing and exact amount of ingredients. But Weed achieved everything through practice of cooking great

number of meals for the parties he used to command.

So even the most simple dishes, cooked by Weed, were very tasty. Besides they were slightly increasing attributes.

“ ... ”

While eating, Weed glanced at Seoyoon. He thought that she'll continue walking after eating the bread and he'll have to catch up with her. After all in a filled with Yeti canyon even the most unsuitable companion is important.

However, to his great surprise, the girl was standing just a few steps away, staring at the Orc. Or at the meat in his hands to be precise. The tasty tasty-smelling roasted yeti meat!

“Chwiik!”

Weed was stunned for a moment, but then quickly handed her the other meat stick. He could hunt for meat and cut another stick from a free branch, all of it was certainly not worth risking his life.

Since that moment Seoyoon was always joining the small Orc for meals. In this journey Weed completely unexpectedly became her personal cook.

Though he didn't think it was quite fair.

‘If I don’t share, she might eat me... She’s a true murderer.’

Chapter 9: Sculptures Of Her

Since Weed and Seoyoon entered the Yunopu Gorge together, they haven't said a single word to each other.

But at every stop they were sharing food. And of course Weed was the one cooking, though that wasn't bothering him much, as he didn't have to run this time, but instead walked calmly while hunting Yetis along the way.

At first they were moving about 100 meters apart from each other. But that distance was gradually reducing. After another hard fight Weed was the first to shorten the distance to 50 meters, as he was worried about being attacked by another group of Yetis. And after a few shared dinners the distance shrunk to 30 meters.

Usually Seoyoon just approached him, taking her share silently and returning back to her place. Each of them ate alone, carefully watching the surroundings.

After another day they were already 20 meters apart. And they fought at the same distance from each other, which gave Weed a chance to observe the girl from up close.

“...”

After one of the battles Seoyoon stopped and took off her half-plate armor. She was fully equipped in heavy armor. Weed had a lot of opportunities to appreciate their expensive shine. But what

he didn't know was that she was wearing chainmail underneath them.

‘That’s the melee profession for you.’ -he thought enviously.

Knights and other melee fighters had the ability to wear all the different kinds of armor at the same time. By equipping 3 kinds of armor: iron, leather and cloth armors - at the same time, one could get the best possible protection.

The only problem was that the combined weight required high strength, endurance and agility attributes. If they were not high enough, one would quickly tire out and lose the ability to move.

After getting an Intermediate level of Blacksmith Weed also gained that ability, but as he lacked the attributes, he didn't dare to equip all 3 kinds of armor like a knight.

Absorbed by those thoughts, Weed almost crashed into Seoyoon, who was carefully examining her unequipped armor.

‘Is it time for repairs?’

Almost all of the surface of armor was covered in cracks, some places even had pieces missing.

“Chwiik!”

Weed quickly approached Seoyoon and snatched the armor out of her hands. He did it unconsciously, as he was always repairing armor for people around him.

And then he noticed Seoyoon's murderous glance.

“Chwi, chwiik...”

Reflected in her eyes was a small green thief! So he took the instruments out of his bag, repaired the armor, and returned it to her as quickly as possible.

Seoyoon took her armor back like nothing happened and started to examine it carefully. Its durability increased, and formerly damaged parts looked completely fine.

Then Seoyoon took off her chainmail and handed it to Weed by herself this time. He silently took it and repaired, and then did the same with her leather armor.

When the girl took off her last set of armor, she was left almost naked. As any proper man, Weed couldn't help but try to oogle her, but at the last moment he thought otherwise.

He valued his life more.

And since that day he was responsible not only for food, but for equipment repairs too.

Actually, skills like cooking and repairing were very rare among unintelligent Orcs. Some Elves, Hobbits or Dwarfs did have Intermediate Cooking or Blacksmithing, but Orcs - never.

But Seoyoon didn't seem concerned about it at all. Maybe she thought that the Orc she happened to meet wasn't ordinary, or maybe she just wasn't interested in surrounding creatures.

Whatever it was, Weed wasn't eager to explain himself, so he just silently walked ahead. However when Seoyoon was logged out of the game, he didn't have anything to do, as he didn't dare to continue his way alone.

Seoyoon left Royal Road every 4 hours. Maybe she needed to eat, or rest. After leaving, she always appearing exactly 2 hours later.

Weed himself ate very quickly. Besides, for the sake of the quest he was spending all of his free time inside the game, and as a result he barely slept 2 hours a day for the past several days.

'Since she's logging out so often, I should do something useful in the meantime.'

And Weed started to make sculptures.

If one was to sum up all the time the girl was absent, there would have been enough for Weed to pass through the rest of his path alone and reach the fortress.

However the risk was far too great. Sometimes Yeti's appeared in groups of 3 or more, and it was extremely hard to deal with all of them alone.

And if he died, he wouldn't be able to login into royal Road for 24 hours! Which would be 4 days in Royal Road time...

Under such conditions the safest way was also the shortest and the best. Sometimes even Weed was able to silence his inner unreasonable greed.

"Yeah, sculpturing is always the best way to spend free time."

Lately, his Sculpture mastery has grown significantly and his art became more diverse. Which actually wasn't surprising, since he had cut many different monsters, castles, people, a dragon and even a tomb with a sphynx.

However Weed decided to make more sculptures of Seoyoon.

"I should cut what I have seen so far while I have time."

The first sculpture was full of motion. The cold side of Seoyoon, fighting with monsters. He had cut the female warrior with a sword.

Ding!

Fine Piece!

You have completed a statue of 'Beauty with a sword'!

The master, whose hands create only great sculptures, left a statue of a beautiful woman in desolate plains!

Her cold face is full of fury towards her enemies.

Artistic value: 260.

Effects:

- Everyone who looks on the sculpture has his health and mana regeneration increased by 4% for the next day.
- Movement speed increased by 5%.
- Strength and Agility increased by 10.
- Intellect and Wisdom increased by 3.
- Men have their fighting spirit increased.

These effects do not stack with other sculptures.

Number of Fine Pieces created: 10.

- Sculpture Mastery has improved.

- Fame increased by 19.
- Endurance increased by 2.
- Art increased by 1.
- Fortitude increased by 3.

His Sculpture Mastery improved again!

Weed exclaimed impatiently:

“Check skills. Sculpture Mastery!”

Sculpture Mastery: Intermediate 9 level (46%).

You can create sculptures, sell them at high prices, and win the favor of ladies.

Even though Weed created a Fine Piece, his skill increased only by 3%.

“Terrible work. The worst of Fine Pieces. What did I do wrong?”

Even if his aim was Fine Piece, that doesn't mean he can do his a sloppy job and still get the desired result. Even when working on a small figurine, a sculptor has to put his heart and soul into it.

For example, in a fight, one can win even without using his full strength. But when engraving a sculpture, even the smallest one, one had to spend a minimum of half an hour not to get a failed work, which would decrease your fame.

The statues of Seoyoon required not half an hour but half a day of in-game time. He had to thoroughly work on every detail and facial features to capture the image of the girl into the sculpture.

And naturally, creating giant sculptures, like Ice Dragon, Pyramid and Sphynx, required weeks or more time.

“Maybe I’m noticing the wrong details?” - Weed asked himself.

In exactly 4 hours, when Seoyoon left the game again, he started to work on the next sculpture. And even though he made a Fine Piece again, ‘Female Warrior with a Sword’, his skill only increased by 4%.

“Maybe I’m lacking understanding? That’s why I get such small skill increases?”

The next day, once he was left alone again, Weed started to cut another sculpture. He was trying to convey the unearthly beauty that was driving him crazy.

He was cutting a sculpture of a beautiful girl, bitterly watching the sunset with a calm face and very sad, almost crying eyes. He

was engraving an image of a girl, grieving deep inside.

“Hmmm. This is hard.”

It was the first time creating a sculpture was so difficult for Weed. He was used to feeling like his hands moving on its own, as his skill level was very high. But the higher his skill level was and the more knowledge he had - the harder it was for him to work.

“Damn! Why is it like this?”

Weed had already created many sculptures of Seoyoon, but every time it was getting harder and harder. The more he looked at her, the more he saw and the more he wanted to convey her charm. And it was an incredibly difficult task.

This time Weed created a Masterpiece and his skill increased by 13%.

But the closer he was to the next level of Sculpture Mastery - the harder it was to increase it. And to actually advance to the next level he needed something special. For example to go from Beginner to Intermediate he had to make a statue of Headless Dullahan.

And to go from Intermediate to Advanced level he'll have to make something truly outstanding.

“Right. I'll never pass to the Advanced level with Fine Pieces.

With my 63% in current level it'll take 3 or 4 Masterpieces..."

Now Weed started to closely watch Seoyoon's every move. Not only in battle, but in-between them too. How she walks, which hand she eats food with, where and how she sat - he was engraving absolutely everything in his memory.

This small and ugly Orc was secretly spying on Seoyoon!

If only she realized that she was accompanied by a player, she'd have gone off far ahead or even kill the annoying little creep.

Sometimes it was difficult for Seoyoon to even look at people, which was why she was trying to hide from everyone by going somewhere remote. Sometimes she wasn't able to do it, men would chase her everywhere, fight each other, and show off their strength. But she still wouldn't talk to them, which was getting her into trouble and making her a player killer in the end.

If Seoyoon knew that there was a man besides her, she wouldn't be able to stay with him.

But not with an Orc! Simple Orcs did not cause any repulsion from her. And that's why Weed managed to see the real Seoyoon that was fighting monsters and sleeping under the warm sun. Her face still remained expressionless, except for her eyes...

With sadness in her eyes, she was watching leaves falling off trees. She often looked at the small brook in the middle of the

Gorge while humbly sitting and waiting for the food to get done.

Once, while walking, Seoyoon plucked a flower and put it into her hair. She herself didn't notice it at all, but Weed almost jumped from surprise!

“...”

Weed thought that she was a murderer who did not have any place for tenderness in her heart. That was completely opposite from what she was letting others see. But when he witnessed Seoyoon watching with her sad eyes two squirrels play... He understood.

“Yes, that's it!”

Weed immersed himself into work again.

“When making a sculpture, one shouldn't jump to conclusions. Even if you think that you fully understand a person, you should stop and think it over. Not everything is simple.”

He might just be making another mistake right now. But this mistake will bring him another step closer to the true Seoyoon.

“I should not only show her cold appearance that catches the eye, but her feelings too. I should try and trust my heart once, rather than think it over again and again. I should try to create the Seoyoon I feel, rather than the one I see.”

Zahab's knife started to dance in his hands again.

To depict the girl's appearance was a relatively easy job, but to convey the harmony of facial features their unique feel was incredibly difficult.

Weed forgot everything he knew about Seoyoon and started to engrave the impression he got after looking at her for a long time. In this sculpture he was putting emphasis not on her appearance, but on the feelings and humanity he saw in her.

And making only the sculpture of Seoyoon would not be enough. The site, where Weed was working was littered by edgy stones, that were depressing to look at. And for the success he had to fix it.

“She's a girl, so there must be flowers. Lots of flowers.”

First Weed carefully recreated the flower she had put in her hair earlier. Then he proceeded to the stones that surrounded the future sculpture. He wanted to cut multiple flowers from them, and every single one was going to take him some time. It was going to be hard to finish it before Seoyoon returned.

“No. I can't give up now... I can't stop here.”

Weed continued to cut flowers, waiting for the girl to return. But to his surprise, two hours passed and she was still absent.

“Maybe she’s sleeping?..”

He was so absorbed by his observations and work, that he completely lost track of time. It was already night in real world, and what’s more important - they had almost reached the end of Yunopu Gorge, and he could continue to travel on his own.

“So she’s not going to return for a while. I have time, so i should finish the sculpture and then go ahead. There’s no reason to give up the work I already started...”

Weed proceeded to cut the next flower.

*

Dr. Cha Eunhee from the rehabilitation hospital was checking on her main patient, like she did every morning.

“Aren’t you tired? Maybe you should rest some from Royal Road?”

“...”

Seoyoon, like always, kept silent, which was not a surprise for her doctor. She was submerged deep into herself, and didn’t show any reaction on the outside, but that didn’t mean she was rejecting everything. Usually Seoyoon would follow the advice of people who genuinely cared for her.

‘Looks like i should accept that I’m in a dead-end. Seoyoon is still not talking, despite all the treatment methods... Maybe it’s time to try something different?’

Dr. Cha Eunhee started to think.

Royal Road was one of the newest treatments for people, who were shutting themselves off from the outside world. Once they started to play and got a taste of life in the game, their status in reality would start to improve.

However despite her long stay in the game, Seoyoon’s state did not change at all.

‘Should i push her harder? But such strong-willed people like Seoyoon are better off when encouraged to change on their own. The use of medications, hypnosis and other means may only make it worse...’

As a very experienced psychologist, Cha Eunhee was the most worried that her patient will become shut in so deep, that there will be no way to bring her back. Seoyoon was already on this path.

‘She doesn’t express any emotions, so it’s hard to determine the state of her illness. Fortunately I know her. Such a kind and honest Seoyoon won’t get shut in so fast. But... Why won’t she start talking yet?!’

It was time for dinner and Seoyoon went to an adjacent room. She was placed in the best VIP ward of the hospital, so she was eating in the next room. Of course, if the patient was too weak, the food would be delivered to his bed, but Seoyoon could walk on her own.

“Okay, I’ll sneak a peek on what she’s been doing in the game lately.”

Cha Eunhee called the captured recordings on the screen.

Almost all of the free time Seoyoon spent was on fighting monsters. That didn’t provide the necessary medical help, but Cha Eunhee still continued to look through the recordings every day.

The higher Seoyoon’s level, the stronger the monsters were that she fought. Fights were gradually becoming longer and more violent. At times the entire battlefield was covered with blood and Seoyoon was falling in such a rage, that she looked like a goddess of war.

This was temporarily relieving the patient’s stress, but nothing more...

After watching such recordings it took Cha Eunhee great effort not to immediately go to play her own character.

“Yeah, Seoyoon has really high level, if she can hunt in Plains of Despair.”

Dr. Cha Eunhee was a bit jealous. If she was in Seoyoon's place, she would die from the weakest monster there.

But Seoyoon was fighting and winning most of the time. Not only because of her high level, but because of her vast experience that she gained from numerous fights.

“Now. I should quickly look through the rest before she comes back. -Cha Eunhee enabled fast-forward.”

Seoyoon was still traveling the Plains of Despair and fighting monsters. Everything was the same.

But then... Something unusual happened.

The girl was resting and looking at the sunset, when two monsters started to approach her from behind, a Hunter of Plains and some terrifying shortie.

“Oh... She will be in trouble if they attack simultaneously.”

But Cha Eunhee wasn't very worried.

If she did die, Seoyoon would leave the capsule the same moment and Cha Eunhee have been notified. But that never happened...

What happened next was what surprised Cha Eunhee.

When the Hunter of Plains died, Seoyoon looked at the other monster that proved to be an Orc. But nothing happened! They just looked at each other for some time and then Seoyoon lowered her weapon and walked away.

However some time later she met the same Orc again and soon they started to hunt and eat together. The orc even fixed her broken armor!

Seoyoon loved to travel alone and never let anyone close. However this Orc didn't seem to bother her at all.

“Last time she became friends with the instructor in Seraburg's training hall. Maybe it's easier for Seoyoon to be close with NPCs and monsters? This Orc isn't half bad. He makes a great servant. I wonder where could I get one like that? Wait a second!!”

Suddenly Cha Eunhee almost jumped out of her chair.

“Orc! What kind of Orc has skills like that? That's a human, a player!”

After battles he was collecting loot, applying healing herbs, and bandaging wounds, cooking... If you try hard enough, you could find another such monster in the game. For example, Cursed Goblins or special mini-bosses had an advanced artificial intelligence.

But an experienced psychologist like Cha Eunhee, was not so easy to fool. She was noticed the tiniest details: the way he was moving, fighting, where he was looking, and how he was picking up the items.

Everything was pointing to a real, live person obsessed by some idea.

“It can’t be...”

Cha Eunhee flinched, like she was struck by lightning.

She saw something similar in the Hall of Fame! Moreover, she was certain, that it was the same Orc from the video.

“There can’t be any other Orc as greedy in this game as that one!”

The Doctor’s heart began to race. Of course the fact that Seoyoon was traveling with someone was great, but Cha Eunhee was a devoted fan of Royal Road.

“There’s only 2 days left before the battle! What the hell is he doing!”

*

On the stone floor the flowers were blooming.

Cut from stone, they looked extremely real and alive. So real, that on a few of them the stone butterflies were sitting and a pleasant aroma seemed to be in the air.

As the flower field was made out of stone, it had an unusual color. White, grey and black, with pattern and without a pattern. Together they created a mysterious atmosphere on the stone terrace, In the center of which Weed was completely immersed in creating the main sculpture.

“Strange...”

The closer he was to completing the piece, the stronger it seemed that tears were about to flow out of Seoyoon’s beautiful eyes. And though the rest of the sculpture didn’t give that impression at all, her eyes were filled with unbearable sorrow...

Following his instincts and trusting the impulse of his heart, he created an extremely sad statue. It even seemed that, out of sympathy to the beauty, all the surrounding flowers were crying too.

From the realization of that fact, Weed’s mood also worsened.

“I should make her happier. I can’t change the eyes any more, but i can do something with the rest of the face!”

Very slowly and carefully Weed worked on the statue’s face and in the end he made a sad, but heartily smiling girl.

Ding!

The moment Weed completed the statue a window appeared in front of weed.

Please set the name of the created sculpture.

“Give a name?”

This had never happened before. Weed tilted his head in confusion and said:

“Seoyoon.”

You chose to name it ‘Seoyoon’?

“Yes.”

Grand Piece!

You finished the sculpture of ‘Seoyoon’!

This work contains contradiction itself.

Depending on their feelings and mood, everyone will see

something different in it.

This young and incredibly talented sculptor created in these lands a statue that causes mixed feelings.

Artistic value: 8700.

Effects:

- Everyone who looks at this statue has their Health and mana regeneration increased by 40% for a day.
- Movement speed is increased by 20%.
- All stats are increased by 30.
- The effects of 2 various attributes are increased by 30%.
- Granted bonus to Earth elemental attacks during the daytime.
- Sculpture emits a special aroma, that heals wounds.
- In case the rights to this sculpture are transferred to a certain person, the sculpture's effects are increased by 20% for that person.
- In the previous case, the effects for others are decreased by 60%.
- Effects do not stack with other sculptures.

Number of Grand Pieces created: 1.

- Sculpture Understanding skill raised by 1 level.
- Handicraft skill has reached Advanced level 2. Efficiency of all crafting skills have increased by 8%. This will affect various aspects.

- Fame increased by 1680.
- Art increased by 65.
- Fortitude increased by 7.
- Endurance increased by 4.
- Charm increased by 40.

All the rights to this sculpture belong to Master Weed.

If this sculpture is given life in the future, it will be loyal to him.

As a reward for creating a Grand Piece, all attributes increased by 3.

Grand Piece!

Weed had created something he had never even dreamed of.

“Yeeeeeaaah!”

From the ancient times there were many artworks left in the world! And most of them were portraying women. Maybe because they are so complex and beautiful.

But Weed was happy not only because he managed to create a Grand Piece. Most importantly, because of it he finally got to the Advanced skill level.

Sculpture Mastery reached Advanced 1 level.

Now you can engrave patterns and work with any material.

Your Sculpture mastery reached the Advanced level.

This affected your attributes and skills.

Sculpting Blade technique efficiency increased by 30%.

Additional properties were added to the ability.

Mana cost on use reduced by half.

Sculpture Mastery is linked to other crafting skills.

Blacksmithing skill:

You can now create bronze sculptures.

Sculptures, created by pouring molten metal into the mold will be harder and more durable.

Cooking skill:

Your dishes are now more vibrant and delicious.

Also they will be more beautiful from artistic point of view.

Sewing skill:

You can now decorate clothes to create custom outfits.

All attributes increased by 20.

- Fame increased by 600.

- Art attribute increased by 20.

New Skill available for learning:

- Moonlight Sculptor Technique.

This technique only available to players with Advanced skill level.

Now, apart from Fine Piece, Masterpiece and Grand Piece, a new hidden grade of sculptures is available - Moonlight sculptures.

This kind of sculptures embodies the nature itself, it will allow to protect your friends from enemies.

The master, that wishes to protect his loved one from all dangers, will appreciate this incredibly valuable ability.

You can learn more about Moonlight Sculpting Technique in Arts Guild.

He finally went from Intermediate to Advanced skill level!

“Hahahaha!”

Weed bursted into happy laughter.

What can be more enjoyable for a sculptor, than reaching the Advanced level of Sculpture skill.

The Blacksmith profession was a lot more popular, and certainly someone must have already reached the Advanced level in it, but among sculptors he was the first. The only Sculptor with Advanced skill level on entire Bersa continent!

“Now I don’t regret becoming a Sculptor!”

Weed felt like the whole world was smiling with him. But then he quickly snapped out of it and started thinking about the immediate future.

“This is not the right time.”

Seoyoon should be returning soon.

The Grand Piece had special effects and was hard to miss. An inevitable consequences of Sculpture Mastery.

When the girl comes back she may discover it, and then the other sculptures. When she learns about them she won’t let him get away.

“It’s time to run!”

Weed looked at his sculpture for the last time and headed towards the exit from the Gorge.

The great master Sculptor, that just created the Grand Piece and reached Advanced level of Sculpture Mastery had to run away from it as soon as possible.

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Late at night [in-game time] Seoyoon logged back in.

After appearing she examined her surroundings like always.

Orc!

In the past few days she had gotten used to his presence.

He was feeding her sometimes, repairing her armor, covering her back. Useful Orc.

But however long she was looking for him, he was nowhere to be found.

‘He Left.’

Though they were traveling together, Seoyoon didn’t quite open up to him. But still she was feeling somewhat empty. She was

Alone again.

Having checked her armor and sword, she set off on her way.

After leaving the Gorge she was going to look for some new lands, inhabited by many different monsters. But then she smelled some unusual aroma.

“...?”

She followed it.

And in the end it led her to a small flower meadow, in the middle of which a sculpture was standing.

A sculpture of a girl, that was laughing and crying at the same time. And it looked much like herself.

“...”

Seoyoon froze in confusion.

‘Crying? Me?’

It was like she was looking into a mirror. But in the mirror she was crying.

‘No. That can’t be me. I never cry. At least as far as I can remember...’

Seoyoon had forgotten when she was crying last time. Lately all she did was try to become as strong as possible.

Ever since she was a child, she was always keeping her grief inside. She was deliberately avoiding all the suffering and pain. And the best way she found to do it was to avoid all people altogether. If no one was talking to her, no one could hurt her, and she could live peacefully.

And she wouldn’t have to cry. Wouldn’t have to feel the pain, that was shattering her world into pieces.

That’s why she was always calm.

Yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

She had never opened up her soul to anyone.

At some point it became hard for her to talk, she started fearing getting close with other people. She stopped talking even to herself. She was hiding her feelings deep inside.

She was threatening everyone who tried to get closer to her with doubt and suspicion. Trying to avoid pain and sorrow, she lost happiness as well.

The cry, coming from the depth of her soul, was rising in her chest, with all the feelings she hid inside coming out with it.

“ ... ”

Seoyoon hid her face with her hands. Down her cheeks tears were flowing.

*

Hall of Fame on the website of Royal road!

The assigned time of the quest was approaching and the tension was rising.

“The day of the battle against Immortal Legion is close.”

“Can that Orc finish the quest? After all it’s ‘A’ grade difficulty.”

“Look at his face. It’s terrifying! Someone with that face can deal with anything.”

“He can. He ought to. Because I’m a mage.”

“I’m a mage too. I’ve picked the Dark Magic specialization and suffered enough... Now I will definitely become a Necromancer.”

“Tell us more about Necromancers.”

“Wait, just wait...”

“Is there anyone who knows something new?”

The upcoming event was actively discussed on the forum.

There were already many topics with various questions and ideas about the battle against undead and the new profession. Hundreds of thousands of players were reading the topics every second and leaving comments.

Every minute someone was asking about news.

As the quest was directly affecting mages, they were heating up the discussion the most.

“Aaaaah! I want to know the outcome. All the mages agree with me, right?”

“I’m interested not only in the outcome, but in the battle itself too. The war against the undead on such a large scale! That’s a whole new level, nothing similar has ever happened before!”

“Yeah, I’m already tired of ordinary sieges. Most of them finish very quickly and they all go the same way.”

“Warriors charging, mages barraging each other with spells... I've seen it all too many times already.”

“Only if one side is significantly stronger it gets interesting.”

People switched over to complaining about sieges.

Once some guild was starting to get significantly ahead of the rest, others were immediately forming a temporary alliance and sending that guild back in its place.

“I want to see how it goes soon...”

“Where? It wasn't announced on any channel.”

“True... So we have to wait until it appears in the Hall of Fame?”

“Unlikely.”

“Huh! What are TV guys doing?”

And then a new person joined the conversation.

“Friends! In the Free City of Somre player called Weed finished another quest. Do not be surprised, but that's the Weed from Continent of magic!”

“Weed from Continent of magic?!”

“I heard that he plays Royal road, some even say, that he joined the order of Freya.”

“Yeah. We thought so too.” - continued the new player - “But this time he finished the quest, associated with defeating Necromancers!”

“Wait. So that’s the chain quest after getting rid of vampires and returning the Fargo’s Crown?”

“Necromancers? So that Orc from the video..?”

“Weed. Weed became an Orc and is fighting against the army of undead!”

At that moment the discussion thread of the video practically exploded. In just a few minutes time thousands, or maybe even millions of messages were appearing one after another. Some were happy, some angry, but no one was indifferent.

The Hero from the Continent of Magick.

Though the peak of the game’s popularity long since passed, many former players still treasured their memories about it. They loved to reminisce the past.

“Yeah... Anyone who seen him in action at least ones would never forget the charisma and poser he showed in Continent of magick.”

“Right. He’s a true Dark Knight, sweeping his enemies away like a storm.”

“The combination of skill, efficient use of abilities, and smart use of terrain features in his endless battles. No compomises. Weed is the role model for many of us!”

“Weed was opening the way into places no one else could get to. He was a legend.”

Former players of Continent of Magick were leaving numerous messages. Others were asking questions.

“Who’s that Weed?”

“That Weed is so great?”

“You don’t yet know Weed, because he must have joined Royal Road not so long ago. Everyone who ever played Continent of Magick know him. He has set the record!”

“I once was following him. Let me tell about it. We went into Rosenda Plains that time. They were inhabited by Hell Guardians

and Cerberuses. And Weed was just slaughtering them! That was really cool.”

“But with a high level that shouldn’t be a problem?”

“Yes. That’s true. But at that time noone ever hunted there yet. Weed was the first. No one of my friends from the Continent of Magick believed it. That’s why I was following him, to check it myself. And he slain absolutely all the monsters, without making any mistakes. In the battle he was like a wild beast, mountains of dead bodies left after him. But that’s not all.”

“There’s something else?”

“Just don’t be surprised. Once he hunted for 200 hours without breaks!”

“200 hours?!”

Many of players of Royal Road were devoting all of their free time to the game. Many of those, who considered themselves good players were proud of it. And of course all of them had at least once accidentally forgot to eat or played until a very late time.

But even for them 200-hour long game marathon was something impossible. Weed wasn’t a legend for nothing.

And then some more players with new information joined the discussion.

“We were hunting in Plains of Despair. Maybe that’s not very hard for players from the center of the continent, but in Rosenheim only a few dozen people dare to go there. And we met a small thin Orc there...”

“If you don’t get it yet, we met Karichwi there! He was thin this time, but the face was the same.”

“The battle against Immortal Legion will happen in Plains of Despair!”

Everyone was waiting in the Hall of Fame to see the outcome.

Maybe if someone posted the full information about the quest, people wouldn’t be so anxious. But the absense of any news only fueled players’ curiosity of large number of players.

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New section “The Bersa Continent” opened on KMC Media.

And today Shin Hye Min and Oh Joowan were reading the first news.

“The prices of mithril continue to rise. The Pirate Guild, that owns the mythrill mine, rised the price by 20% already, that caused an uproar among other players.”

“How to strengthen your weapon? The effect of the sharpening stones found so far isn’t that great. But did you know, that a Blacksmith with Intermediate skill level can significantly increase the durability and damage of your weapon?”

“The new trade route was open between Kingdoms Lootun and Thor. The road passes through the Forest of No Return. The Scarlet Wolves guild cleared it from the monsters and built the road. Merchants, who use it, must pay the 10% tax.”

“Though they lose 10% of their revenue, considering how much sorter that way is, many players will choose to use it.”

“Right. For a while the guild’s income will rise. Many players will consider joining their ranks.”

Tales from the Bersa Continent.

First there was information about monsters, hunting sites and professions. Then discussions about politics, society and economy. When large powers, like kingdoms, were confronting each other, there were many changes and many new quests were appearing.

Therefore the second part was shared between the experts in various fields.

Today they were discussing the quest about stopping the

Immortal Legion.

“His level is very high. Many players hope for his success, but most probably the quest will be failed.”

The military expert Yee Yonghan confidently stated his point of view.

“In any war quantity is not the most important part. What’s important is not how much soldiers you have, but how good they follow your orders and work together. It’s impossible to fight against an army of undead with such diverse forces - Orcs, Dark Elves and Humans.”

Han Yeelseo, who was sitting besides him, was nodding in agreement. He was playing Royal Road too and was among Top 300 strongest players.

“Right. To manage such different races he need a lot of leadership. Will he be able to lead them into battle?”

“I think so too. Fighting with Orcs and Dark Elves against the army of undead is a waste of time. If I was in his place I would have got away from there long ago.”

“And no one would judge you. This quest is impossible to do alone. And as far as I know, none of the Top 50 guilds received a request for help. In my guild Crimson Mercenaries no one heard anything about it. That’s why he will definitely fail the quest.”

“It is entirely possible, that after their death all the orcs and Elves will become undead and attack other kingdoms. According to our research all the quests of ‘B’ grade difficulty, received so far were associated with defeating small groups of very strong monsters or passing some very difficult route. However the ‘A’ grade difficulty quest will affect the situation on an entire continent.”

“But you don’t have to worry about it. When the Immortal Legion comes our guild of Crimson Mercenaries will be there to defend human kingdoms.”

Almost all of the participants of this discussion tended to think that the quest will be failed. Many of the invited players were using this opportunity to attract new members to their guilds, promising help in the upcoming disaster.

Shin Hyemin was frowning.

“So the quest everyone is rooting for may fail?”

“Who knows... Maybe it’s already finished, or...”

“Or he dropped it and ran away long ago.”

Everyone was talking about the failure.

But then they faced the colossal protest of ordinary players. Of

the people who knew Weed! Those, who were waiting anxiously for the profession of Necromancer to become available were swearing at them.

Book 07: Into The World

Chapter 1: Pre-War

Weed headed to the rocky area in Yunopu Gorge.

Yeti monsters occasionally showed up in the area where the rocks were piled up, but they were easy to handle and gave decent experience.

“This seems to be enough materials”

Weed inspected the rocks and smiled in satisfaction.

He had been accompanying Seoyoon for several days acting as her servant, looking after her and cooking her meals however; thanks to this he had been able to further advance his sculpting.

A beautiful motive was an important requirement, if one was to create art.

Seoyoon had sleek white thighs, ebony hair and a slim waist. She also had a thin slender neck and an immaculate collarbone leading up to her almost radiant face, an appearance that you would not get tired of, even if you looked at it for a year.

With her as a model he had successfully created a few masterpieces, and he had finally learned advanced sculpting.

“Skill confirmation! Sculpture life bestowal!”

Sculpture life bestowal

A technique invented by Emperor Geihar the Master Sculptor, which makes it possible to grant life to sculptures.

Requirement: This skill requires Advanced Sculpture Mastery .

This skill consumes 5000 mana. Additionally, the Art stat of the user will be permanently decreased by 10, and the character level will decrease by 2.

Warning!

Sculptures have a strong sense of pride.

They will fight if they see a sculpture resembling themselves.

Each time it was used 10 art stats and two levels would be lost.

Because of this, it wasn't a skill to be used lightly. If it wasn't used, however, it wouldn't matter whether he had it or not.

He wouldn't use it very often though. Due to the high cost he would save it for when it was absolutely necessary.

“It’s an investment... It is a necessary sacrifice to improve the chances of winning the battle.”

Weed pulled out Zahab’s engraving knife and started sculpting. He was going to sculpt a monster to animate.

“There are plenty of Orcs and dark elves already. I’ll be better off creating something that will aid me in commanding them.”

Weed started carving out long wings, sharp claws and a thick belly to create a wyvern sculpture.

Wyverns were extremely strong monsters.

Their average level exceeded 380, and their tough skin was quite resistant against both swords and magic, while in flight, their speed was comparable to that of a running horse.

But even if he was able to recreate the body, it didn’t mean that the sculpture would be as strong as the original creatures.

Its strength would be determined by his art stat, and even though the shape was similar, the difference in strength would be obvious if compared with an original.

“I don’t have very much time so sculpture will have to be a little rougher.”

If life was granted to the sculpture, his stats would disappear and his level would drop. Of course he would prefer to create a sculpture on the level of a magnum or classic. But, alas, he did not have the time for this and had to make it rather sloppily, and thinking about this brought an aching to his chest.

Even though he had resolved to create the wyvern, Weed was on the verge of tears.

A sculpture created without care, even by a master sculptor, wouldn't turn out very great.

But this was a Wyvern sculpture was more than ten metres tall, and he wasn't even sure that he could finish it. Even if he put in all his effort and worked for two nights straight, he only had enough time to create the general outline of a Wyvern.

Ching!

A Fine Piece!

You have successfully completed the Wyvern!

Rulers of the skies!

Fierce and tough monsters, that stands at the peak of all beasts.

They enjoy eating horses whole, and sometimes they will hunt

fish swimming in the rivers.

The Wyverns have a high sense of pride, if you shoot them with an arrow while they are flying, they will let you taste instant death.

Monsters will keep their distance from the statue out of fear.

Artistic Value: 750

Special Bonuses:

Health and Mana regeneration is increased by 10% during the day.

Flying speed is increased by 20%.

Agility is increased by 5

Strength is increased by 30

All stats are increased by 3.

The special abilities of nearby monsters are weakened during the day.

Monsters cannot go near the statue.

These effects cannot be combined with the effects of other sculptures

Fine Piece created: 12

- The Sculpting skill has improved
- Fame has increased by 6
- Stamina has increased by 1
- Charisma has increased by 1
- Charm has increased by 1

Thanks to the advanced sculpting skill, even though he didn't put in much effort, a fine piece came out.

Still, because he was already such a well-respected sculptor, his fame didn't rise much, he had passed the point where he could become famous for sculpting a fine piece.

Now, rather than making a fine piece it was easier to gain fame by questing and hunting. This would mean that to gain more fame from sculpting, he'd have to sculpt a grand piece.

Additionally, the stat increases weren't very big either. The amount of stat points he received for a sculpture of this level had decreased drastically, as his sculpting skill improved.

In order to receive as big stat increases as in the the past, he would have to create a Grand Sculpture or better.

Well, a famous sculptor cannot dwell on his work. He needs to continually challenge himself to improve his sculpting.

“Alright. It's time to use this new skill.”

Since it was actually a fine piece, he would regret the loss a little less. But Weed still hesitated to activate the skill.

It was difficult to complete the quests needed in order to gain experience, and he had just reached level 299. He only needed a little more experience to reach 300, but if he used the skill he would be two levels further from this goal.

“Well, it has to be done. ‘Sculpture life bestowal!’”

Weed gently touched the head of the Wyvern. A small crack started forming in the surface.

Pasasak!

Like a chick hatching from an egg, the wyvern broke through the shell of the statue.

By Weed’s hands, a Wyvern was born.

You have granted life to a sculpture.

The power of the sculpture is based on the level of the art stat.

The art stat is currently 790, so the sculpture’s base level will be 359.

However, due to the monster being a flying-type, a 10% level penalty will be applied.

Additionally, two affinities are bestowed upon the sculpture when life is granted to it.

The affinities vary in power according to the form and quality of the sculpture.

Wind affinity (100%).

Fire affinity (30%).

The creature's flying speed is greatly increased, and the creature will be partly resistant to fire magic.

5000 mana has been used

Level has dropped by 2

Due to the decrease in level, 10 points have been deduced from your most recently upgraded stat. The stats will be regained once you regain the lost levels.

The Art stat has dropped by 10

The stat can be increased again through any activity related to sculpting or other art forms.

Please be careful with the sculpture's life.

Upon death, the sculpture must be granted life again to return its soul.

The sculpture cannot be revived if it has been completely destroyed.

A true miracle!

He had made a living wyvern.

“Wow, that went well.”

Weed inspected his creation.

Granting life to sculptures seemed to be a very convenient skill. To make sculptures whose power was based on the art stat!.. Sculptures with mighty strength and high agility, who'd be able to move around and fight monsters... for the artisan classes who weren't suited for fighting, a skill like this felt like a dream.

The skill was created by the master sculptor Emperor Geihar von Arpen, the first man to unite the whole continent.

Of course, there were lots of other benefits, beside the sculptures' fighting power.

Similarly to this skill, summoners and elementalists were able to

summon beings and lead them to battle.

For those classes, any amount of items or experience gained by the summoned creatures would be transferred to the summoner.

However, when it came to sculptures they kept the experience and level individually.

A sculpture's initial strength depended on the art stat, but if led well by a sculptor, it would grow stronger and more powerful.

Animated sculptures were typically a little stronger than elementals and other similar summons.

Additionally there was no limit to the number of sculptures that could be active at the same time.

There was however a crucial difference between summons and animated sculptures when they are killed.

When a summoned being is killed, the summoner can just use an ability to resummon it.

It is very common for an elemental to be killed in battle. However, the only thing required to resummon it is a little mana, so it is only a tiny loss.

But it's different for animated sculptures.

If a living sculpture suffers a fatal blow, the life given will leave it, and if it's completely destroyed and the parts dispersed, it cannot be repaired.

In some way Weed dreaded the loss of a sculpture brought to life by sacrificing two levels and ten points in the art stat more than dying himself.

“It's not a skill to be used carelessly. However, if I increase my art stat it might prove very, very beneficial to me”

A sculptor's highest stat was his art stat. If it was used correctly, it could even make up for the generally bad fighting strength. A Sculptor who cannot fight, can just make a sculpture fight for him.

Before Weed's eyes, the wyvern spread its wings and turned around. The head alone was the size of a whole person. Its stomach bulged, as it spoke for the first time.

“Master!”

A loyal steed.

Weed was overwhelmingly pleased.

“Yes, I am your master.”

However, the wyvern had a question after having displeased looked over its body

“Why am I so ugly?”

"....."

“Did you sculpt me with your feet?”

"....."

“I’m really disappointed to have come to life this ugly”

Sculptures had great pride indeed!

The Wyvern wasn’t satisfied with its body, and was very displeased.

He hadn’t had enough time to sculpt the large body thoroughly. Due to this, there were places here and there that he hadn’t really worked on.

Parts of the wyvern been very roughly carved, the wyvern was really a crude and incomplete sculpture.

“Anyway, I brought you to life, so I’m your parent. From now on, you will do best to follow me. You should even be willing to

sacrifice your body to save me, since I'm your parent"

Weed didn't intend to let his 'childbirth' go to waste though.

He had no intentions of losing the wyvern after granting it life. To get as much use out of it as possible, he intended to thoroughly pamper it.

The wyvern didn't share Weed's point of view, and had something to say.

"I would have preferred not being born."

"....."

The wyvern was very prideful, and wouldn't listen to him. Soon enough, though, Weed had an idea.

Such a demanding person would probably be a sucker for flattery!

He would just have to thoroughly flatter the wyvern, by playing on its pride.

"Listen to me. Your face might be a bit angular, but it just serves to make you look stronger and more masculine. Don't you think so?"

“Wahahahaha!”

The simple-minded wyvern was easily won over by the silver-tongued Weed.

“Master is nice. He seems to be a worthy person to serve”

“Yes of course, I created you. Now follow my orders closely.”

“I will. But what is my name?”

Weed had to decide on a name for the wyvern that he had brought to life.

“Master, find a good name... please.”

The Wyvern had high expectations. As a sculpture with a lot of self-respect, it wanted a name full of strength and pride.

Weed pored over it for a while, and in the end he decided on a name

“Let’s call you Wy-1”

“I don’t know what that is, but it sounds good. What does it mean?”

“It means ‘the coolest guy in the sky’.”

As Weed said this, the wyvern flapped his wings. They were mighty wings, that could easily harness the air to its fullest effect.

“I like it very much.”

“Yeah. It’s a name I picked just for you, Wy-1.”

Weed, the silver-tongued negotiator!

“Thank you for naming me master, but there’s something I’ve been wondering about.”

“What?”

“My siblings. If you make other sculptures like me, what will they be called?”

Weed thought about what he’d call the others when the time came. He decided to name them similarly to Wy-1.

“Wy-2”.

“Will that be the name of my next sibling?”

“Yes.”

“And my sibling after that?”

“Wy-3.”

“Those are some very nice names. I like them very much.”

The wyvern continued to flap his wings in joy. At this moment, Weed was confirmed in his decision.

This was the whole point with generations! The other wyverns would surely be satisfied with their names too.

Just like the bird clans in Lavias, the City of Heaven, all winged creatures weren't very smart.

Furthermore, this guy was carved from a piece of rock. His head was practically made of stone, and thus Weed wasn't very surprised that his intelligence wasn't much better than that of a rock.

“Let us depart. Carry me”

“Yes master”

Weed climbed onto the Wyvern's head.

Whoosh, whoosh

The wings beat a few times, and then they were floating through the air towards the light. They were very high in the sky, and he could see the entire canyon below him.

Soaring, Weed recognized small dots below him as the flower garden and the masterpiece he had sculpted. That would be the sculpture that truly represented Seoyoon's inner being.

“I do not know when we'll meet again, O most beautiful woman I've ever seen”.

Weed shook his head in regret.

She should have realized by now, that all those sculptures were modelled after her.

“I'll be more careful the next time we meet. And pray that you won't kill me”

The flying wyvern didn't meet any trouble from the monsters on the ground. Meanwhile Weed was struck breathless by the view of the landscape below.

He finally left the Yunopu canyon and rode towards his destination, the Yuroki mountain range.

*

"....."

Seoyoon tried to smile. She wanted to smile the same bright smile as the statues.

Tears could flow easily, but to laugh again was impossible.

Somehow, that was how she felt.

drip, drip, drip

Her red lips moved a little.

It was nowhere near perfect, but she was smiling.

She was thrilled by this fortunate turn of events!

“Perhaps I will even be able to laugh?”

But at this thought, her face fell. There were still important things she couldn't do.

She still couldn't speak or laugh.

However awkward it was, the smile was pretty, and this brightened her frowning face.

The white-skinned beauty with countless statues depicting her beauty.

On a background of a canyon's precipice, a lone girl stands beside a statue.

It seemed to Seoyoon, that the world had just become a slightly brighter place.

*

Rattle rattle (some sound of wheels on pavement)

A merchant's wagon, carrying a load of goods was arriving at the city. After a long and arduous journey, it had finally arrived at its destination..

The merchant at the driver's seat turned to the man lying on top of the wagon.

"Sir, we have arrived."

"Is that so?"

The man jumped down from the wagon, landing on his feet.

“This seems to be the Kingdom of Prain.”

He was broad-shouldered with a suntanned face.

With short cropped hair and an ignorant expression, his appearance was quite plain.

Geomchi 449!

Geomchi 449 had safely arrived at the kingdom of Prain.

His level was actually pretty low compared to most of his colleagues, who had an average level of 241.

However, there was a reason why he was still level 200.

He had entered the forest alone to hunt deers at level 5, with a single purpose!

“Deer blood is soo delicious...”

He remembered the iron straw going through the deer’s neck several times before it died.

It was a pain that he couldn’t share this with anyone.

“Everything’s alright for a warrior, as long as he has his sword”

Geomchi 449 travelled with a lengthy strides and a powerful gait.

All he had was his shabby clothes and a bag full of swords.

He spent all the gold he earned from hunting on food and swords.

“A true swordsman only needs a sword. Armour will just be a burden.”

Geomchi 449 was searching for strong and famous warriors in the kingdom of Prain.

Swordsmen, warriors, knights, paladins...

As long as they used a weapon, their class didn’t matter.

He just wanted to become stronger.

“I’ve heard that you are one of the strongest people in this city. I challenge you to a duel.”

The challenged person was taken aback. Seeing Geomchi 449 in his shabby clothes, the person couldn’t help but ask him.

“Are you out of your mind? My level is 280. Your level seems low and you’re not even properly equipped”

“I don’t mind. Will you accept the challenge?”

Most people that receive a challenge will accept without much thought, merely thinking of it as another kind of entertainment.

“Alright. You’d better not regret this after I’ve beaten you”

“Of course I won’t.”

The person Geomchi 449 was going to duel, was a paladin.

For some reason, the paladin was struck by a sense of foreboding about the duel.

“You just wander in and challenge me wearing shoddy clothes like that.... I don’t know who you are, but fight properly, okay?”

“Holy Shield!”

The paladin cast holy shield, one of his basic skills.

“Sun god’s divine protection! Warrior’s Blessing!”

Paladins used blessings to protect themselves, and to increase

their fighting strength.

They could also heal themselves in critical situations.

Due to this, most people tended to avoid dueling paladins.

Paladins could heal up their wounds very quickly, so if you didn't inflict enough damage they would just recover more health than they lost.

“Holy Blade!”

The paladin's sword became coated in white light.

Holy flames appeared whenever the sword was swung.

The skill used a fair chunk of mana to add a splash effect to the paladin's attacks.

“Here I come.”

Whenever the paladin swung his sword, white flames appeared.

Geomchi 449 jumped around, dodging the flames.

“It affects an increasingly large area... The longer the match takes, the more dangerous this will get for me”

Geomchi 449 ran into the fire, even though he risked losing some of his health, and raised his sword as he approached the paladin.

“Head!”

The surprised paladin blocked the attack with his sword.

sliiiide...

Geomchi 449’s sword slid past the paladin’s sword like a snake.

“Wrist!”

This time, his sword was aimed at the paladin’s wrist.

Once again, the paladin narrowly dodged the attack.

The paladin’s eyes finally sharpened, he had seen countless battles.

Usually duels like these were decided by the duelers’ levels, normally, a battle with a level difference like this would have already ended. His opponent was resisting impressively, despite the big level gap.

“Very well”

The paladin raised his sword to his chest, and released it with all of his might.

“Bash!”

The Paladin had composed himself, and began a series of powerful sword strikes.

The power gathered in the sword made the strikes very powerful. This time he intended to fight with his full power from the beginning.

Without the slightest hint of anxiety, Geomchi 449 changed his fighting stance.

His opponent's attacks were very straightforward, and he dodged them smoothly by moving his waist and ankles. His sword grazed the paladin's side and made a small wound, but the damage inflicted was hardly noticeable.

Geomchi 449's healthpoints had dropped by 20% when he was hit by the “Holy Blade” earlier; On the other hand, the paladin had only suffered slightly from the wound in his side.

The Paladin's defensive blessings had nullified most of the damage, but despite this the wound restricted the paladin from moving as freely as before.

A murmuring crowd of spectators had gathered to watch the duel.

“This person...”

“I’ve heard rumours about people like him, who travel around in search of strong people to challenge”

“People who hunt strong monsters and players, relying solely on their swordsmanship.”

“Could he be one of them!”

Lots of rumours were being spread about the Geomchis on the continent of Versailles.

The level of Geomchi 449 was low, and he was very susceptible to paladin’s attacks. Despite his skill at martial arts, the 80 level difference would eventually wear him out. In addition to his lack of armour, his defense stat was also quite low but to do it like this was his objective.

“Only by fighting people that are stronger than me, can I hope to improve my sword technique”

I need to think and act faster. I’ll have to train for a long time, if I am to have any hope of winning against opponents with such an overwhelming advantage, otherwise I’ll just lose to the strength of their skills and spells.

Geomchi 449 didn't only fight humans. He also fought monsters at hunting grounds, whose names he didn't know.

Facing unknown monsters in an unknown terrain. He just jumped into the fray, and saved doing the thinking for afterwards.

Just like the other Geomchis, the goal of Geomchi 449 wasn't to reach a high level. His true goal was to improve his concentration, by fighting strong opponents. Due to his lack of spells and abilities, he could only depend on his swordsmanship and movement.

While searching for strong opponents throughout the Versailles continent, Geomchi-449 had fought countless monsters. All of the Geomchis from 6 to 505 was currently travelling to polish their swordsmanship. By doing good deeds along the way, they also fulfilled their duty as warriors.

Although this wasn't the fastest way to level up, all kinds of battle related experience was gained by doing it this way.

Meanwhile, the first six Geomchis were cooking and eating lots of food at the Serabourg Castle.

“It feels all lonely, now that the disciples have left”

Geomchi 2 smiled after hearing Geomchi's words.

“Well, it isn’t often that we get to take a breather like this”

“True”

Geomchi 3 added to this:

“I’m sure that the disciples will benefit greatly from their experiences in this world”

Geomchi 4 and Geomchi 5 also joined in with their opinions:

“If one seeks to strengthen his swordsmanship, he must first strengthen himself. If they get more real fighting experience, their swordsmanship is bound to improve as well”.

“That’s true”

Feeling satisfied, Geomchi resumed eating and drinking.

“As expected, it was a wise decision to send the disciples out to train on their own.”

“Indeed, Master”

Geomchi 2 smiled. With the matter resolved, he and the other instructors, started eating too.

The food had been paid for by the disciples.

The students had no use for money during their training.

And the instructors could surely put it to better use.

Following this logic, all the students were “firmly advised” to ‘donate’ their earnings to the instructors.

*

In the Yuroki Mountains, all of the Orcs, dark elves and humans residing in the plains of despair had gathered.

The leaders of each race had come together peacefully!

They had united despite their differences to fight against their common enemy, the undead legion.

“I thought you had run away”, the Necromancer told weed in a contemptuous voice, however, upon seeing Weed’s annoyed look, he quickly regretted it.

Upon returning to the rocky mountain range, Weed had used his Sculptural Shapeshifting ability to change form to an Orc.

The fat and proud Orc Karichwi, with a mouth full of wicked

teeth, vicious-looking eyes and a constantly running nose.

This ugliness, while not very favoured by the humans, was very impressive to the Orcs and served to further bolster his charisma.

“What’s the status of the undead legion”, Weed asked.

“There’s only two days until they’ll arrive. The lich Shire will break off from Bar Khan’s main army and bring a contingent here from the mountains to the east. We need to prepare for when the undead legion comes to spread death through the land.”

The undead legion would be advancing from the large pit to the east of the mountain.

He could see an ominous red mist rising from the direction of the pit.

It had a dark and dirt-stained colour. An increasing amount of smoke was flowing out from the pit and was slowly coloring the entire sky a dark red.

It must be an extraordinarily large army.

The necromancer explained:

“When the sky has turned completely red. When this has happened, the magic power of Shire will increase greatly, and the

undead legion will start their advance.

Suddenly, Weed heard a voice inside his head.

- "Weed, I've arrived at the foot of the mountain", he heard Mapan's voice saying.

Mapan had finally arrived after crossing the plains of despair, with his wagon fully loaded with silver bars and arrows from the Rosenheim Kingdom.

Choosing to become a merchant wasn't a good idea, unless you were very diligent.

Many things were needed in order to successfully make profit from the buying and selling of goods.

First you had to learn the local market prices, and improve your reputation with the local residents as much as possible.

The combat classes got stronger by hunting at hunting grounds or dungeons, while a merchant had to travel around and sell goods instead.

The merchant class was the most sensitive to changes in different towns, wherever they went, merchants would easily be accepted and increase their reputation.

Due to these attributes, merchants received quests much more easily, and whenever they entered a shop, they could receive all kinds of quests suited for a merchant; from finding a missing ribbon to reading and summarizing a book.

When they had gained the right amount of experience and information, very important quests might also show up, making it possible to invest in a town or province.

When a certain level of reputation has been reached, it's also possible to buy all goods cheaper and to buy special goods that are not usually available.

It was Mapan's dream to earn the money needed to buy a whole village.

- "What do I do now? It's going to be troublesome to get the wagon through the mountains."

- "Wait there, I'll send someone to show you the way"

Weed pointed at some Orcs.

"You guys, chwiik!"

"Chwit chwit chwit! Command us."

"There is a human at the bottom of the mountain, bringing us

some goods in his wagon. Bring him here, and be careful not to frighten him”

“Understood. Chwichwik!”

The Orcs took off without a second’s notice.

*

Mapan was relaxing while waiting for Weed.

He had crossed the Plains of Despair, and was now at the Mountain. The mountain was lush, with birds chirping in the dense forests, and a lush breeze gently blowing through the plains.

“It feels really good to have come here”

Mapan was entranced by the scenery.

There was a flowing river in front of the mountain range.

The clear river was teeming with fish, and numerous deer and giraffes were grazing on the plains.

“This mountain is the best after all.”

Mapan was very satisfied with the view.

Since he was a merchant, he always picked the safest possible routes when travelling, so he rarely went over mountains.

The mountain range reminded him of the time he and weed travelled to the kingdom of Briton.

The rocky mountain range was truly magnificent, but the many rocky cliffs made it hard to traverse.

Near the top of the mountain, the trees were covered in snow.

The wind was a little bit chilly, but travelling at this climate was perfect.

Mapan felt that the terrain was somehow familiar.

“Have I been here before? This is certainly my first time here, but seeing this place.....”

But it was so remote...

Mapan could never have seen this before. Nevertheless, he felt a twinge of familiarity.

Even the snowy clouds near the top of the mountain felt oddly familiar.

“Where have I seen this?”

Orcs were coming down from the mountain.

Mapan handed the carriage over to the Orcs with trembling hands.

“Drunk-ik! Carriage. Me take care of”

Mapan felt faint and baffled as he listened to the Orcs. Why were they acting like this?

“Ah right, the Hall of Fame! I saw those mountains in a Hall of Fame video”

Mapan felt very excited, but still couldn't really believe that Orcs like these existed.

“What's the deal with this, Chwik!”, the Orc then asked while waving his Glaive

“Human! Bring to Karichwi. Chwichwik!”

The Orcs started ascending the mountain again, easily carrying the load that Mapan had struggled to get there.

Mapan nervously followed the Orcs as they lead him, and when he saw the citadel of the Dark Elves, he cried in relief.

“It’s here. This is the destination.”

At the front of the Orcs was Weed, transformed into Karichwi.

“Thank you for the work Mapan. Chwiik! “

The Chwiik sounded oddly familiar.

Mapan realized that Karichwi was actually Weed in disguise.

He was pretending to be an Orc.

“Weed! This situation...”

“More stories, chwik! We will talk later, now it’s finally time to get started. Lucille!”

Weed had met an exiled blacksmith in the village named Lucille.

"Chwichit. Here, come and start smithing the weapons”

“Understood”

The human smiths quickly brought the materials from the wagon to the forge, and began working on them.

Once properly equipped, the humans, Orcs and dark elves would do far more damage to the undead.

However, the dark elves were proud and didn't feel like obeying .

“Pfft, it's only made of silver”

“What's with these crude weapons? Wouldn't our mythrils swords serve us better?

“These so-called 'crude' weapons will be crucial in the fight!” Weed said.

Weed had spent his entire fortune on these 'crude' weapons, that the dark elves were now trying to discard.

However the Orcs liked him and didn't mind.

'My weapon is so strong, chwiik!'

“It's so shiny.”

The simple-minded Orcs were quite happy with their new silver weapons.

Weed's plan of how to fight against the undead legion was finally nearing its execution.

This time, Weed's strategy to fight against the undead legion wasn't improvised.

"The Orcs will be the vanguard, and the dark elves will be at the rear."

As the strategist he was, he arranged their placement with utmost care.

The silver arrows that Mapan had brought were immediately distributed to the Dark Elves.

Their archers were amazing, even when they were only using oaken bows and arrows.

Their power shouldn't be underestimated.

The preparations for the war were almost complete.

The Orcs and dark elves had nearly finished gathering.

The dark elves had finished building the castle walls.

Additionally, trenches had been dug in front of the walls.

The height difference would make it easier to defend against a siege.

The elves gathered, and the Orcs swarmed.

The humans were instructed, and began reinforcing the castle.

The castle was finally completed. It was huge and beautiful!

A long stretch of wall had been erected along the length of the entire ridge.

At the top of each tower, there were cauldrons filled with burning tar.

Now they were making oak gates

Weed had nearly overseen the completion of the defenses. But if one looked closer, it was pretty shabbily constructed overall.

Everything seemed to be able to collapse without a moment's notice.

It was because the Orcs were so lazy and stupid. The dark elves actually did their jobs properly, but were small in number in

comparison

“It’ll be fine, the undead aren’t very bright.”

Weed didn’t want to, but he was forced to abandon overseeing the last part to grant life to more sculptures.

Of course, creating just one meant that Weed would lose another two levels.

The novice strategy might be to try to make 100. Anyway, it was now due time to create more sculptures.

“Nothing comes for free; You can’t expect to complete an A-rank quest without doing something extraordinary.” Weed’s tears dried as he completed the first sculpture.

Each time a sculpture was granted life, his level fell by two. Although it pained his heart, it was a necessary investment.

There were only two days left until the confrontation with the immortal army; in that time Weed’s level dropped to 279 as he granted life to nine more Wyverns.

Chapter 2: Undead Legion

“Dark red smoke obscures the crimson sun. Chwiik! The land is locked in darkness, even the birds have stopped singing. Chwikchwik!”

Weed stood on the nearby rocks and muttered to himself.

Because his achievement should be listed in the Hall of Fame after the quest was completed, Weed would be able to assume airs related to it.

Weed was standing in front of a million Orcs and a hundred-thirty thousand Dark Elves.

In truth, even with the million Orcs, Weed still felt uneasy.

There was a disturbing feeling that made him shiver.

The Orcs were organized in regiments of thirty-and fifty-thousand members. On the battlefield, the Orc regiments spread without end.

You couldn't even see them all. There were more Orcs than there were trees on a mountain.

The black-skinned Dark Elves gathered in an enormous group.

Any normal human being could not help but shrink in fear.

The mountains were literally crawling with monsters.

They rode beside the ridge, the line of defense guarded by the Orcs and Dark Elves along the bottom to the top of the walls.

The humans from the village in the Plain of Despair gathered beside him. The priests of Freya and the Soldiers of Rosenheim Kingdom had all gathered in one place.

With so many monsters under his command, Weed was in an ecstatic mood.

Weed was so excited that he began to sing on top of the rock.

“Die Undead Legion, die! Chwichwi chwiik! Who is going to win? I am going to win! Lovable Undead. Give me experience and items! Appear already, Undead! Hurry up and appear!”

Unbelievable tone-deafness!

Within Weeds singing there were no rhymes, no rhythm, or anything that sounded appealing at all!

Weed’s song only lead to distress the Orcs and Dark Elves further.

“Somebody stop that song!”

“Oh, even to us Orcs, this song is repulsive! Chwiik!”

“It brings disgrace, humiliation, and despair on our race. Chwichwit!”

As the Orcs became more and more annoyed, Weed sang with ever more vigor and happiness.

Suddenly...

RUMBLE!

The ground shook so much that the human, elves, and Orc Soldiers couldn't stand properly anymore, while the dark red smoke grew thicker in the air, spreading throughout the battlefield.

Weed looked at the Necromancer and spoke.

“The Undead Legion has awoken from its long and deep slumber. We won't find peace before we grant all the Undead eternal rest. If we are unable to put the Undead to rest, we will be slaves for eternity.”

Finally, it began.

Weed finally stopped singing and looked toward the Undead Legion.

From the faraway pit, Skeletons, Ghouls, and Zombies suddenly emerged. The Undead Army continuously appeared, forming a line.

RATTLE RATTLE

The clashing sound of the skeleton joint was regularly heard, while smoldering blue smokes appeared from the zombie bodies.

The Zombies release a lethal poison that would kill a human in minutes unless an antidote was administered.

Stomp, stomp, stomp!

The ghoul generals leading the Zombies and Skeletons were three metres tall.

Ghouls had sharp nails and teeth with far superior physical abilities than the average Undead skeleton!

“Yes... I can smell living flesh and blood nearby!”

“We will turn all of you into undeads like us.”

“Let’s be friends.”

From the nearby lakes, Ghosts started to break through the water surface, joining with the other Undead hordes.

The Undead Legion started to move without any sign of disorder.

The Skeletons moved in a precise line, and though the Zombies were slow, they gradually made their way forward.

Whooosh

As the Undead Legion advanced, the trees and grass in their path withered and dried from their poison.

In comparison, the Orcs and Dark Elves did not look organized at all.

“The Undead are finally here! Chwik chwik!”

“Those damn bastards. Chwichiik!”

“What should we do? Chwik!”

“It smells bad. It feels so painful since we Dark Elves have keen senses.”

“It’s really depressing that a graceful elf like me must fight against such corpses. The thought of it makes me want to run away right now.”

The Orcs and Dark Elves fell into confusion with the appearance of the Undead Legion.

The armies moral was running low after watching Legions of Undead crawling out of the ground.

The pressure and fear generated by the Undead Legion was extremely effective.

Any living creature would find it hard to utilize their full ability while fighting the Undead Legion.

Due to the difference in levels and power, the Rosenheim Kingdom’s Soldiers were especially vulnerable to the Undead legion’s fearsome aura. Already, there were Soldiers who became sick with fear.

“I want to go home.”

“There are too many enemies.”

“How can we win against such a large Army?”

Buran, Becker, Hosram, and Dale, who were all centurions, were trying to calm their Soldiers.

“It’s okay. The fear will only last a moment.”

“Don’t worry. Once we start fighting, the bloodlust will comfort you. It is not everyday that we get a chance to make a huge impact on the world.”

“We will meet again even after death.”

The Soldiers became even more depressed and started bursting into tears.

Mapan stood frightened behind a group of Rosenheim Soldiers. The only thing keeping him on the battlefield was the thought about grabbing all the high-level, quality loot from the Undead!

“So that’s the Undead Army!”

Feeling the hair standing on the back of his neck, Mapan hesitated.

The enormous and all-consuming Undead Legion was marching forward!

The Zombies shambled at a slow pace, while the skeleton’s joint creaked as they moved.

Seeing the Skeletons holding their rusted swords, Mapan was one of the first to feel frightened.

Gulp!

Mapan's saliva dried on the top of his throat.

'How should we stop that Weed....'

Involuntarily, Mapan looked up above.

There he found Weed had transformed into the Orc Karichwi.

Weed showed a completely serene face.

Even while facing a threatening situation, Weed was able to keep calm.

'Aren't there almost a hundred-thousand Zombies, Skeletons, and Ghouls?'

The vanguard of the immortal Legion!

Since there was still quite a gap between them, Weed waited patiently.

The monsters themselves were not to be feared.

They only needed to be grabbed and beaten down.

However, Weed was the only one who thought like that.

The Orcs and Dark Elves were completely terrified.

When almost all of the Skeletons had reached the wall, Weed gave an order.

“Filthy fellows. Chwiik! Don't they take baths. The disgusting smell even reaches up here.”

“.....?”

The curious Orcs and Dark Elves listened to Weed's speech.

“If you turn into Undead, you won't be able to bathe. Then, as time passed, you'll go bald. You also won't be able to eat. You will starve and your stomach will become thin. So fight and crush them!”

“Chwiik chwiik!”

“Kill the Undead!”

The spirits of the elegant Dark Elves and the gluttonous Orcs immediately returned after hearing Weed's words.

Weed took out his glaive and signaled the start of the battle against the Undead Legion!

The Orcs raised their shields and drew their glaives.

The Dark Elves took out their javelins and targeted the Skeletons as soon as they saw an opening.

The battle to decide the faith of each race began!

Mapan was shocked.

With a few words, Weed had managed to recover the Orcs' and Dark Elves' morale and raised their spirit to fight.

'So this is what Weed is capable of...'

In reality, it was not even that surprising.

It was completely natural for Weed to treat the Orcs similarly to how he treated the Geomchis, since he was already used to their particular attachment to food.

The Orcs and Dark Elves fought fiercely from the high grounds.

The Zombies and Skeletons were forced to scale the walls and had a terrain disadvantage.

Facing the Zombies and Skeletons on high ground, they did not have a hard time.

Several Orcs died because of the pincer attack, but those that had died were the ones that simply ran out of luck.

Even if the Zombies and Skeletons were stronger than usual, they didn't give Weed's Army any particular problems.

The amount of damage dealt by the Ghouls was substantial.

"D-Death, life, give it up. We will make you our... f-friends."

Ghouls threw poison which scattered, destroying trees and Orcs alike.

The Orcs took a considerable drop in health upon each hit.

Ordinary Orcs couldn't possibly hope to fight the Ghouls equally.

However, Orc fighters threw themselves in unison according to Weed's instructions and overwhelmed the Ghouls.

Dreadful number of Orcs!

The scale should theoretically be tipped in their favor by winning the skirmishes against the Zombies and the Skeletons.

Even if one assumed some damage was taken, such minuscule amounts could be ignored.

The speciality of the ghoul forces was to consume the corpses of the fallen to restore their bodies and increase their strength.

But with only a slight number of dead Orcs and Dark Elves in the vicinity, their specialty couldn't be used often.

The Rosenheim Kingdom Soldiers also eagerly took part.

Weed hunted the Zombies and Skeletons, supported by the priests' healing and blessing spells.

When a ghoul came too close, the Royal Knights watched over the Soldiers to make sure that they didn't die.

“Buren, Becker, Hosram, Dale! Penetrate enemy lines with the Soldiers. Priests, focus on healing the Soldiers.”

Weed utilized the Rosenheim Kingdom Soldiers to clean up the remaining enemies.

While the Royal Knights were maintaining safety, the Soldiers

went to finish the rest of Zombies and Skeletons.

After around three hours of combat, the Undead Legion lost their strength and started to falter.

The battle was still on going, but victory would almost certainly go to the Orcs.

“Uwaa!”

Mapan enthusiastically applaud.

“Outstanding! The battle between the Undead Army and the Orcs! The long wait was worthwhile.”

It was a wonderful scene, seen from the best seat.

But Weed’s tension hadn’t changed at all from his attitude before the battle.

‘It was that kind of feeling. Every time things go too smoothly, something will go wrong!’

Weed continued to issue orders continuously

The Orcs and the Dark Elves who participated in the battle were tired and wanted to rest.

The Orcs with serious wounds were taken towards Weed, to the place that could be called their headquarters.

“First Aid!”

Paraaaak!

Weed was applying loose bandages like crazy.

He applied medicinal herbs to the Orcs’ bleeding injuries before bandaging them firmly.

His Fasciation technique, having reached Advanced Level 3, marvelously stopped the Orcs’ wounds from bleeding and restored their health.

Other than wounds that caused immediate death, Fasciation could be used to treat standard wounds to some fairly large wounds.

Weed hunted for experience, while bandaging the wounded.

During his rests to restore his mana, he purposely got hit.

Stat improvements in Defense take time.

It helped to increase his Patience stats and his defensive skill.

By doing this, his skill level in Patience and Fasciation went up beautifully.

“Thank you. Chwichwik!”

Weed kept the Orcs alive by dividing them into several long units to distribute their strength, forging them into united groups, thus preventing competition between Orc warriors to maintain minimum casualties.

The Orcs that had fought were able to rest, and were allowed to eat the food Weed had prepared and to receive bandaging if needed.

“To recover, you must eat. Fight to eat. Chwichit!”

“Thank you. Karichwi!”

Food was also given to the wounded Dark Elves.

Because the Dark Elves were already used to eating grass, there was no need for additional ingredients.

The meat soup was gulped down by the Orcs, who liked meat very much.

The Orcs put their fingers in the soup and stirred it.

But no matter how long they looked, there was not enough meat.

“Karichwi, Karichwi!”

“What do you call this soup, Karichwi”

“This meat soup is decent. Chwit.”

"That's right. Chwichik.”

“Chwiik. But why, why is there no meat.”

There were only tiny bits of rabbit meat floating in the empty soup.

The Orc diets involved a lot of meat, but it would be impossible to give them what they wanted.

The Orcs had to compete for more food while they ate, so their hunger could finally be satisfied.

However, Weed wasn't worried.

He had already surveyed the units fighting against the monsters, and accordingly assigned leaders with complementary

characteristics to them to prevent casualties.

Between wrapping bandages and preparing food, he still would have been busy even if he had ten hands.

“Skill. Mind Hand”

Weed cast his treasured skill.

Mind Hand, which had seemed worthless at first, turned out to be a high quality skill.

Weed used his extra hand to cook and wind bandages faster.

Finally all the Zombies, Skeletons, and Ghouls that had come out were defeated.

The silver-plated glaives made regeneration impossible for the Undead monsters.

“Finally, the Undead Legion was defeated.”

Even though the Necromancers voiced words of celebration, Weed stayed vigilant.

‘There is no way it ends with just this!’

Without leadership, fighting spirit, and charisma, it was impossible to give orders to the Orcs and Dark Elves.

To evaluate a situation, you also need to look at the entire battlefield. By observing the battlefield, it's easy to discover where you're weak, and where you can reduce or add power to balance your side.

Under Weed's command, his various production skills complemented the fighting prowess of the Orcs and Dark Elves.

Nevertheless, the degree of difficulty was rather easy in comparison to the Vampire Blood Clan.

‘It isn't going to end like this.’

Weed gave an order.

“Chwiik! Orcs, Dark Elves, withdraw behind the castle walls. Prepare for the next battle.”

“Chwik chwik. The battle has ended!”

“We won!”

The Orcs were too busy celebrating to hear his words.

The Dark Elves were the same.

The Orcs victoriously swung their glaives in celebration, while the Dark Elves preferred to look smug.

Each of the Orc tribes were led by an Orc lord, but even they weren't listening because they were also extremely jubilant.

“Weed. Congratulations.”

Mapan was also glad.

While everyone else relaxed, Weed's weariness grew larger.

He began yelling orders.

“Everyone return to your positions quickly! Chwichichichik!”

Skill: You have used Lion's Roar.

Morale increases by 200% for all allies in the influence range of Lion's Roar.

Any present state of confusion will be cleared.

An extra 220% increase in Leadership will be applied for five minutes.

“He said, that's an order!”

“His voice contains such great authority.”

“Come on, let’s go back.”

Weed’s strong leadership made the Orcs and Dark Elves return to their posts.

Depending on the power of your leadership, commands can be absolute.

Coming from the pit, an Immortal Army had monsters rushing out.

Reapers holding long sickles!

Banshees whose voice could slice the air!

Mummies that covered in bandages!

And beside the Yuroki Mountains were Ghouls and wild Undead beasts!

"Kuekuekue."

“Let us kill all of the living.”

“We will reap your lives.”

“Kiyaaaak!”

The Undead creatures launched a massive surprise attack.

While their individual abilities were questionable, he had heard that the ghoul leader's position at the axis was now weaker than before. They weren't comparable with the Zombies and Skeletons from before, but there were many other ghoul and skeleton warriors to replace the ones that died.

“I don't believe it!”

Mapan was devastated.

Another Immortal Army had emerged from the pits.

Suddenly, Undead Legions specialized in heavy offense filed out from the pit.

An enormous crowd madly rushed through.

The battle before was child's play compared to this, this Army held a much more oppressive feeling to it.

For the Orcs and Dark Elves who were celebrating victory before, this was a serious blow.

It took several hours, but they had overwhelmingly won the previous battle.

Their minds were still somewhat in disbelief of the situation.

Even if the Soldiers had become absent minded, their Commander had remained vigilant.

‘As expected of Weed!’

Mapan sincerely admired his work, but Weed was thinking completely differently.

‘Lucky bastards!’

There wasn’t enough time to reform the lines.

From the start, his job wasn’t anything that allowed him to relax like the other players.

He knows that being a moonlight Sculptor is a difficult job, as his life was not an easy one.

He, himself, have no artistic ability, and when making a sculpture, It was preferable to make it big and ambitious!

Surely a pretty woman can make a nice model for a sculpture!

But, because he was sculpting masterpieces of her, he had to flee and avoid getting targeted and caught by Seoyoon.

Having never lived a grand life, Weed feel proud and honorable of having won so easily. He had moved to a safe place where, thanks to his Army's raid on the Undead Legion, little damage reached.

"Orcs, fix your positions."

"Chwiik! I know."

Thanks to the effects of Lion's Roar, through Weed's command, the Orcs repositioned themselves.

The Orcs worked on their defensive formation. Many walls of oak were deployed and stacked along the walls of the castle by the Orc.

"Kill them!"

"Til death tears us apart!"

"Kkkiiiiieehoooo!"

As for the other side of the Army, it had the effect of putting the opponents in screams and despair.

"Oh, I can't do it."

"We're too weak."

"I will be their friends. Enough, I want to die now."

The Dark Elves soon started crying. The Orcs also wanted to put down their glaives.

The Priests were waiting for Weed's orders.

"Start preparing a blessing."

"Yes! Understood, Weed-nim."

The Necromancers worked together with the fifty priests of the Temple of Freya from Rosenheim Kingdom.

Now they gave the Orcs blessings. Overcoming the despair and confusion brought upon them, the priest sang so they could fight.

"Oh! Spectacularly beautiful Freya, the Goddess! Your fair hand stroking through my hair, gives it infinitely deeper grace. The instrument I play is because I loved you at first sight. Love you

forever, that will not change, and dedicated to you."

The priests' stats had risen slightly through the last quests. Their level had not risen that much, but by singing a hymn, the Freya denomination's contribution would increase.

The church hymn was about a song of a man's love that was dedicated to Freya.

Due to the effects of the hymn, the Orcs and Dark Elves overcame the despair and prepared to battle.

In order to maximize the height difference of the terrain, the castle have large ditches built in front of the walls.

By far, it was a more favorable fight toward the Orcs and Dark Elves.

The humans from the exiled village were also a big asset to the battle. The smiths had created the silver glaives and arrows and the hunters had lay down all kinds of pitfalls throughout the mountain.

Under the castle wall, the Ghouls and the mummies received great damages as their bodies were pushed against each other.

"Eehyo hyohyo!"

On the other hand, banshees and several other types of Spectres were able to pass straight through the walls.

Some possessed the bodies of the Orcs, or flew above spraying liquid acid.

The upcoming fighting between the two would result in a large-scale battle.

At the time, Mapan was on a rock where he saw Weed. He was at the highest point of the Yuroki mountain where you can view the entire battlefield.

That was after all, the best place to send commands.

Mapan was significantly distressed, but Weed still looked as composed as ever.

‘If you had ambitions like Weed’s, there won’t be a crisis that is too much.’

With increased faith in him, Mapan followed Weed even more enthusiastically and with admiration.

Weed was actually able to calmly command the Orcs and Dark Elves. Even in the midst of crisis, when the walls crumbled and the Orcs were killed by Undead monsters, he was completely unfazed.

‘If I die, they are nothing to me.’

Selfish Weed!

To Weed, the deaths of the Orcs and Dark Elves were nothing.

Rather, Weed’s mask of serenity broke thinking the items dropped from the Undead Legion would be stolen.

There were thousands of items right under his nose that Weed desperately tried to get.

While the front lines were busy fighting, Weed did not hesitate to pick up items.

Yet, commanding the frontlines did come before picking up items.

However, because of the threat of painful, agonizing deaths, the Orcs and Dark Elves didn’t care to take command.

“Raise troop morale.”

“The right flank needs to be more engaged.”

“Before the walls break, humans repair them”

"Orcs, go for the Ghouls and mummies, and the Dark Elves with magic and spirits, take care of the Ghosts."

Weed was able to calmly and impassively analyse the situation and command his troops.

After the effect of Lion's Roar disappears, however, his potential to command decreased.

Because of the many selfish Orc lords, Weed's commands were obeyed slowly, or not at all.

Weed generally left the Orc officials alone, as the mana consumption for Lion's Roar used to make the Orc lords obey was no joke.

Besides, if the authority of the Orc lords were ignored, they may get irritated.

So, turning a blind eye a little bit won't hurt..

To successfully conduct warfare, one cannot pay attention to all the trivial details.

A prolonged battle will decrease the stamina of the Orcs and Dark Elves.

Commanding the battle, preparing the food, emergency Orc

bandaging, the frenzy left no time to breathe.

Weed issued orders breathlessly.

“Orcs -- ignore the front of the battle and concentrate! Dark elves! The Ghosts are attempting an attack! Try using magic. Chwichwit!”

The Dark Elves eagerly displayed their magic .

“Flame Spear!”

“Flare!”

“Elemental Shock!”

The banshee Ghosts that flew through the walls met a barrage of spells from the waiting Dark Elves.

Flame Spear, Ominous Blaze, Elemental Shock.

Having stronger mental capacities than Orcs, Dark Elves were capable of magic ranging from frenzy magic to elemental attacks.

This magic undoubtedly came from a Ghost

RUMBLE! THUMP THUMP THUMP.

The burned mummies angrily battered the walls, but the Orcs stubbornly persisted.

Even the height of the walls were over ten metres.

On their favourite terrain, the Orcs stood bravely with their glaives. They relentlessly hurled insults at the Undead.

“Bring it on. Chwit!”

“Chwichik. These ignorant bastards!”

“Gonna try washing off that stench? You’ll still stink. Chichwik?”

“You are fighting against noble Orcs. Chwichwik!”

The Orcs and Dark Elves briefly worked together, efficiently fighting operating as a group.

Although their armies did not fall, the Legions of Undead were slowly being diminished.

To the Orcs fighting hard on the walls, it was a surprise.

Their allies beside the Orcs were being strangled.

“Chwichit, why?”

“Death. The end of the road. The end of life. Men, your path to an eternal life will come from me!”

Each Orc was possessed by a Ghost.

Their pupils turned pure white and poisons seeped from every part of their bodies.

Suddenly, there were possessed Orcs attacking from inside the city walls, throwing the battle into chaos.

In addition to the mummies, it was now necessary to fight allies, too. Because the front walls were vulnerable, many of them were beginning to be captured.

Weed observed the situation impartially.

“All free-minded Orcs, lift your weapons and attack!”

The Orcs possessed by Ghosts dropped their glaives.

The silver-plating on the weapons were worrisome for the Undead.

The free-minded Orcs attacked targeting the possessed Orcs who released their weapons.

To the possessed Orcs occupying the walls, the concentrated dark elf magic was overpowering.

Flames melted the walls, causing large chunks of ice to fall down on the possessed Orcs.

The insubstantial, intangible Ghosts were not affected by the attack.

Ghosts, Orcs, and bloody Dark Elves!

Weed actively participated in the defense of the city walls.

Because enemy forces were stronger, it was a strategic retreat.

The enemies maintained a particularly strong defense, but large numbers of Orc warriors and fighters were designated the task of searching for enemy weaknesses.

Little by little, the battle had pushed between the walls, breaking into the enemy lines.

After having seen him work a few times, Mapan continued to admire Weed.

“Weed is so amazing.”

Once again, it was wise to listen to Weed in order to win.

Weed could efficiently command the battle against the Undead in many ways.

He could keep an eye on the entire battlegrounds within his field of vision and display excellent judgement. Weed's control of his emotions was impeccable, thought Mapan.

In reality, however, it was a little different.

Although the results were similar, there was a large difference between what Mapan felt and reality.

It was comparable to the distance between the heavens and the earth.

Weed had an extensive amount of experience from fighting countless Undead monsters. Thus, harm fell only to the Undead.

From fighting in the majority of the battle, vitality continues to fall until fighting becomes painful.

If you cannot correctly determine the number of Undead, then it will be impossible to win.

An idea of which side was at a disadvantage could be formed from observing the behaviour of the Undead along with the movements of the Orcs.

This caused an enormous amount of nagging!

“You stupid, dull, slow-ass Orcs! Chwik. Chwik chwichwik chwichik! Move quickly and as soon as possible! Chwichwichwik! Your allies are dying. Fix it already, go go go go. Chwikchwik. And the Dark Elves’ eyes are closed. Are they sleeping now? Tired already? So you’re just like the Orcs, nothing better to do, huh? With your weak bodies, what will you do? Chwithwitchwit. Why don’t you beg to be saved from punishment. Chwick!”

It was impossible to command the troops outside without nagging.

Thus, Weed commanded the Orcs to fall back through nagging and yelling. However, in fact, it was a strategic retreat. The morale of the Undead Legion rose, but it was a mistake. Weed was ready to initiate his plan.

He intentionally allowed the Undead to easily enter so that the entrance would be empty. Then the alliance surrounded them from three sides: the left, right, and front.

“Chwit chwitchwt! Kill the enemy.”

"Chit. I, Porchi (Orc's name) , will take care of them."

The Orc fighters and warriors rushed to attack the enemy troops. The Undead who came past the walls were now facing a situation which they were almost completely surrounded.

Weed's eyes started to shine.

“Orc troops, retreat! Isolate the Undead that are trying to break away and escape!”

Since some of the walls were handed over to the Undead, it was an opportunity.

Not only that, he even used the lion's roar to give this command.

While watching this spectacle, Mapan had renewed respect.

‘I see, by choosing not to fight, it was the golden opportunity.’

Applying flexible tactics according the the situation!

It's easy to plan, but it's more difficult to change plans on the spot or abandon them.

Don't be greedy for victory. It's impossible to create a favorable place that would allow you to defeat your enemies easily without trying.

‘Yes, that’s Weed.’

Weed expanded his view and saw the Orcs fleeing back. Closely chasing the troops were the Undead.

“Whew, how unlucky to have forgotten.”

During the fighting, a herb field was found. Many herbs comprised of yellow leaves were found growing there.

Herbs with red leaves help with vitality and the ones with green leaves help with mana. In fact, most of the herbs follow this pattern.

But the leaves that are colored black, white, purple, and yellow are also herbs. The black herbs are mostly used for black magic. The white herbs can be processed by Wizards. The purple herbs are used to create poison.

In the early days of the Versailles continent, the yellow herbs didn’t receive the attention that they should have. The herbs were the most common, widespread throughout the continent, and if they were consumed, they seemed to have no effect.

There were just a few people who chewed the yellow herbs, which they saved in case of an emergency.

Then one day, one of the programs associated with Royal Road revealed to the public about that herb.

The yellow herbs increased stamina!

Since that day, people soon began to collect the yellow herbs. Those herbs were taken from their roots and began to have value.

This herb became the most expensive of them all!

Throughout the Versailles continent, the yellow herbs disappeared in a moment. Now the seeds were completely dried out.

Since then yellow herbs have become very difficult to find, but there was a pile growing here.

The plan was changed so that during the battle, the precious herbs can be gathered.

Making the Army retreat, just for the sake of gathering the herbs.

Through nagging, the tactical operations were all done due selfishness!

Nevertheless, the situation the Orcs and Dark Elves were in would worsen in time. But still, Weed was not caught off guard.

‘Oh my corrupted luck! This simply will not end.’

*

Pale’s party was working hard at catching fishes in the underground dungeons of Jinn Lake.

Damn fishes.

Pale stared at their large rotting eyes rolling, then fled. Zephyr was fly fishing, and Maylon and Pale were shooting arrows.

Pale, Surka, Irene, Romuna, Hwaryeong, Zephyr, Maylon. The seven of them definitely worked and hunted together as a party. The party’s level rose significantly to two-seventy to two-eighty.

Quietly, relaxing time with each other without concentrating on leveling up. But now, the only fishes that seems to come here are from upstream.

Romuna suddenly lost her temper.

“Aaahhh! It’ll be possible to become Necromancer.”

She has been wanting to become a Necromancer. Although she was learning the brilliant flame-oriented magic, she didn’t have a well-matched aptitude.

When fighting, mana consumption was very high, so one was only able to enjoy fighting briefly after a long rest.

In comparison, Necromancers almost didn't need a break! With a weak series of magical attacks and their Undead, a user was able to fight.

Among the top four of her dreams, she wanted to be a powerful Necromancer that had control over countless Undead Legions.

It was her dream to raise lots of Undead from the ground and demolish a city!

Of course, you would need to raise your level very high in order to do that, but she, Romuna, would not give up.

It was thrilling and fun.

That was the sole reason for choosing a Wizard in the first place.

“Haaaaaa.”

Romuna gave a heavy sigh

In recent years, Maylon, as the host of the Royal Road program, had been too busy broadcasting live to come and party with them.

However, there was another way to talk with her.

Romuna was complaining, as predicted.

“So bored. I wonder when Weed-nim is coming? It’s a little boring always hunting in the Lake of Elementals. Even though it gives a lot of experience.”

“Yeah. He’s taking a long time”

The officials were quite curious.

It was said he was on a quest in the Plains of Despair.

According to Mapan, he had successfully completed the quest, but Weed still had not returned to Rosenheim Kingdom.

“It’s boring without Weed-nim.”

No matter what you did, working together with Weed was exciting. They eagerly established pyramids, hunting together on the frontiers. The tension and thrill of doing something significant created a sense of accomplishment. The sight of his various production skills, like cooking and sculpture, was also a pleasure.

“Strangely, I haven’t had contact with Mapan-nim these days . . . He hasn’t sent a whisper to me once.”

Eventually, Pale went ahead and sent a whisper to Mapan.

- It's Pale. How have you been doing?

Only a few minutes had passed when Mapan answered.

- Yes? You messaged me? Yes, yes, yes! But what did you want to ask me?

- It's Pale. I meant to ask you what you've been doing.

- Yes. Hello, I'm very well.

Pale was puzzled.

He was normally friendly and outgoing when you spoke to him, but Mapan seemed distracted by something.

- Can you talk right now?

-Yes. , I can talk.

Pale tilted his head to one side, puzzled, but continued to speak.

- Where in the village are you doing business? If you're bored, we'll come and party with you. Mapan must also level up.

- I'm not. I'm not doing any business right now ... Kkkuueeeeg!

He made a noise like a strangled pig!

A long time passed before Mapan sent another whisper.

- It's ended for now. A Spectre just charmed a group of Orcs just now, so I was surprised.

- Pardon? A Spectre?

- Kyaah! The battle is really amazing.

Pale shook his head. He couldn't seem to understand Mapan's story.

- Fighting Spectres? What are you talking about now?

- I'm saying I'm here with Weed-nim!

- You're with Weed-nim? When did you meet?

- A few days ago. I just thought I would be transporting goods for a client. Eulaaaaaaa! I'm sorry. Just now, one of the walls of the possessed Orcs was seized. Very shocking . . . Anyway, this is Weed-nim's battle.

- Battle?

- Battle! The Battle of the Yuroki Mountains.

- What's that ... Where are the Yuroki Mountains?

- I'm at the Plains of Despair right now. I'm here watching Weed-nim's battle.

- And what do you mean by "orcles"

- I said Orcs! Orcs, Orcs! The famous ugly Orc from the Hall of Fame! That's Weed-nim!

- Keeeeek!

Pale was startled.

When Weed left for a B-class difficulty quest in the Plains of Despair, they did not ask any questions.

They were curious, but had thought asking for details about the difficult request he was leaving for would be impolite.

First he was in combat against the Necromancer, and now he was at war against Legions of the Undead!

Pale immediately told his party about the information as they persisted to know.

“What did you say?”

"Weed, is he that fat Orc?"

“Weed is a Sculptor. How could he possibly do those quests?”

Focused hunting within dark dungeons, the party was too busy to hear the latest rumours.

So the most recent rumours were the ones they were unaware of until they ended.

“Once you know where it is, you should ask!”

- So how is it now? Do the Orcs and Dark Elves listen well? The Orc lord, Gulchi, looked the most handsome and strong.

Surka and Hwaryeong questioned, and even the normally cold and cynical Romuna joined in.

“Necromancer! Is it possible that this is the Necromancer from before?”

A former Necromancer was vital for Wizards.

Romuna excitedly spouting many questions was no surprise.

Each party member chattered to the wind, but Pale paid them no mind.

Ignoring the opinions of his party, Pale eventually just asked Mapan questions.

-How is the battle against the Undead Legion?

-Just Zombies burning; the battle against the Ghosts are coming to an end. It's been 10 hours already. It's a extraordinary battle! I didn't expect to see such a large-scale battle. It was really worthwhile to come here.

-Is the battle close to ending?

- Yes. It seems to me that under Weed's command, his Orc Army will win. . I can't say for sure because Weed has a very negative expression.

- Why?

- I don't know. I saw his expression harden with realisation ... Theoretically though, in a few hours we'll be able to gain victory against the last dead enemy .

Pale, who heard the story up until that point, suddenly felt like paying the place a visit. Then Romuna's nails bit into Pale's body and said,

"Pale, we're going!"

"We?"

"Yes, I'll even buy a horse in order to make it in time"

Even if the ride was fast, many horses are needed to change mount whenever they lose stamina and the trip will take a few days. But Pale and his party were unanimous in conviction.

"Yeah, let's go see!"

"We're going to see those Orcs."

"Woohoo! Let's get going!"

*

"Klkkiiiiiiiieeheeheehooohyoooohoooo!"

Finally, the howling of the Banshee marked that the Undead Legion has been annihilated. Three out of the eight walls been

destroyed and two hundred and thirty thousand Orcs lost their lives.

The Orcs were busy fighting, and forced to take a considerable amount of time.

Weed gave the Orcs time to relax in middle of the battle. These were measures so that the health regeneration and stamina consumption does not exhaust their physical strength.

The Dark Elves were also given time to meditation to conserve mana.

Maintaining the top condition of the Army as much as possible!

Quite a lot of time had passed since the battle and the Orcs and Dark Elves were slowly rejuvenated.

Incompetent commanders would just follow their initial plans and rely only on their allies' powers. This was an established, simple formula for victory.

With Weed, there was a difference. The Orcs had been through a lot of hardships, considering the chronic fatigue they had. It was a serious matter for his allies to have suitable amounts of comfortable rest.

Weed did not cede to the tension.

‘So far, the battle has not been very difficult.’

If a lesser Commander had been leading the Army, a third of the Orcs would have been slaughtered. It was a battle where anything was possible.

With the dead Orcs, the situation with the Undead was becoming extremely disadvantageous for the battle.

The walls provided great benefit to defense, where if they were not there, the Dark Elves’ magic would not be able to be properly used.

Because of the mummies and their power to burn through the walls of the castle and the Ghosts possessing bodies, they were in middle of the entire conflict.

Nevertheless, Weed would not put a strap to his mind

‘I’ll be damned if this quest was this simple to succeed. To contribute so little and easily get rare items is impossible.’

Users cannot rely on luck in order to gain from such a difficult quest. A user has to suffer in order to enjoy the pleasure of reaping a large income.

The land was too harsh and barren to create classics,

masterpieces, or better statues.

Weed hoped the more powerful enemies would appear.

“A death aura, a ying without a yang. Let’s go, chwiit. I’m going to teach them the true meaning of death, the power of those living, the meaning of fear and despair!”

-Skill: You have used Lion’s Roar.

Influences all allies in range of Lion’s Roar with a 200% increase in morale..

Any present state of confusion will be cleared.

An extra 220% increase in Leadership will be applied for five minutes.

His yell was fierce.

Weed stood on the panoramic rocks overlooking the battlefield, his arms held wide, magnifying his roar.

His roar echoed in the mountains and in the valley. The birds perched in the tree tops rained feathers as they billowed up to the sky as one.

"Cheuwaaa! Yawaaa!"

The Orcs followed, pounding their glaives upon the earth until it shook. It had begun with Weed, but soon it evolved into an

enormous fury that spread from Orc to Orc.

The Dark Elves too sang a song of their own.

Hosram, Becker, Dale, and Buren, the Soldiers of Rosenheim Kingdom, heard yell and drew their swords from a rear unit.

It was then.

It was calm in the pit again after additional Undead creatures emerged from it.

Great, immense entire bodies of bone knights!

The giant, devious creatures of the Yuroki Mountains!

Paladin's blessed by the churches of various countries, with worn armor and swords. They fought past Legions of the Undead, even as the Undead revived. Giant monsters roamed the battle field, at the same time that others powerful monsters wandered by themselves.

The Orcs would attack the Undead monsters that morphed in the mountains.

Weed's experience hunting them told him of their strength.

More than a hundred Orcs should be mobilized in order to hunt a single one of those monsters.

Now, making the uncommon types of Undead die would be more challenging.

An entire wave of ten thousand ancient Undead Soldiers and five thousand giant monsters!

The proliferation of Undead would not end there.

The witches rode colossal rhinoceroses.

In the past, when Barr Khan had attempted to create a Land of Death on the continent, the Serpa witches were the ones in charge of the Undead legion's vanguard.

If the witches were skilled in black magic, they would present potions and curses.

Witches numbering a whopping 3000!

It is said the words can become the trigger.

As they waited, Weed appeared and ordered an immediate march.

RUMBLE!

The land shook as giant rhinoceroses marched across the mountains. The rhinos crushed the giant trees before them. Too many giant monsters and Undead to count. The true Army of the Undead -- the truly elite, the Army of the Lich Shire.

Chapter 3: The Lich Shire

The glorious Undead Legion was horrifying.

Individually, they were very strong monsters, but they were even more terrifying as a group.

The faces of the Orcs and Dark Elves paled as they saw the Undead Legion.

Some of the Orcs even abandoned their weapons and fled from the battlefield!

“Ueek!”

Mapan was also horrified. The Undead Legion held this much of a presence!

“Kue! Kue!”

“Kill everyone! Make more allies. Ku ku ku!”

The Serpa Witches broke out laughing.

Ancient Undead soldiers and giant monsters began to attack. They tried to climb over each other in order to scale the walls.

It was a disaster!

However, to Mapan, Weed seemed relieved and full of life.

It was a bit boring until now, but I finally have a battle worth fighting seriously over.

Well, guess it's my time to give a complete display of my strength, and experience more thrills flowing through me.

Fighting this army will be a lot more fun.

Of the Undead Legion, Zombies and Ghosts were fewest in numbers, but individually, they are powerful monsters.

Never before were there this many strong monsters gathered together for a reason, and he was going to take them all on.

Suddenly, Weed raised his hands.

“I am just starting. Dark Elves, prepare to fire!”

Weed walked to the Dark Elves who were waiting on the high ridges since the start of the battle. There were fifty thousand arrows available for their bows. The Dark Elves pointed their bows askew at the sky and waited for Weed's command.

“Fire!”

Shuchouchoushuk!

This was the first arrow attack since the battle started.

The myriad of arrows completely covered the sky. The fifty thousand arrowheads that he had saved sparked under the sun.

“Above... from the mountains. Its bad... comforting feeling.”

“Do not stop.”

The Undead Warriors lifted their shields over their heads.

Looking like old relics, the shields, probably dating back to more than a hundred years, crumbled after being pelted by the arrows. Those without shields had to stop the arrows by blocking them with their bare arms.

”Aaaah!”

With arrows landing everywhere, the ancient Undead soldiers cried out in pain. But one ancient Undead soldier secretly laughed.

“Ke ke ke ke!”

His body size was unusually large with wide spaces between his bones. Thanks to that, the arrows luckily just passed between his bones, causing no damage.

“Ke ke!”

The ancient Undead Soldier’s jaw was wide open as he laughed in delight.

“Second volley ready. Fire!”

Arrows rained down every second, due to Weed’s orders.

The ancient Undead Soldier again, crossed it’s arms and just looked up at the sky as the arrows passed between his bones.

Countless numbers of silver arrows rapidly rained on the ground.

“Kuuek!”

The Undead screeched painfully.

The light was painful to the Undead.

“Night is going away!”

The arrows in the Undead made them look like hedgehogs.

The Undead have solid bones, but it was to no avail. The silver arrows had the effect of preventing recovery and was lethal to them.

“Fire, fire, fire!”

The arrows were shot rapidly, non-stop.

The tens of thousands of arrows flew down from the high mountain and caused the Undead to be unable to move, creating a beautiful sight.

“Amazing, Weed!”

Mapan said in admiration, but Weed did not feel good at all.

“That much is.....”

Weed’s heart broke as he saw money flying away with each passing shot, but it brought piercing pain to the Undead. Still, the ancient Undead soldiers marched on under the leadership of the Serpa Witches.

“Water force, scramble!”

Weed had prepared three secret weapons!

First, the Orcs holding their silver plated glaives. The second, buying two million silver arrows, and the third, using the Wyverns.

“Haaaaghhh!”

From the rear of the mountains, the Wyverns flew with tearing cries. The soldiers of Rosenheim Kingdom riding the Wyverns were holding onto a big cup filled with water.

Sswaah Oh!

Water fell from the sky, as if it were raining. However, rather than regular water as rain usually was, it was holy water. The Herrera Cup changed regular water to holy water.

*

Seoyoon, who had crossed the Yunoph Canyon, went into the town of the exiled.

"....."

The village was completely empty and deserted. All the people had moved, and the battle with the Orcs was to be blamed.

Seoyoon walked from there, taking breaks throughout the day, continuing by following her feet. Powerful, and thick forests, towering peaks.

Her footsteps naturally headed to the Yuroki Mountains.

It was the place where monsters were anywhere.

The Plains of Despair contain dangerous monsters, but the area is too wide to hunt around.

Going deep into the Yuroki mountains, Seoyoon was standing in front of the fighting Orcs and Undead. The Serpa Witches unfolded their magic and spells whilst riding the rhinos.

“They are strong, I think”

Seoyoon wanted to fight, but there were too many monsters. She was not afraid of them, but it would be much too time-consuming to fight them all.

Holy water was being sprinkled from the sky by the Wyverns. The Undead Legion was shouting as they marched, while the Orcs were sputtering out words of hatred.

‘Hate it here.’

Seoyoon liked the quiet. She placed her hands over her ears,

leaving the place and moving deeper into the mountains.

*

Chaeng Caheng!

Chou syuk.

“Wukyaaaaaa!”

“Chwiit!”

With antipathy, the Undead were soaked with holy water!

The Wyvern force sprinkled holy water constantly, and walls of silver arrows were being shot.

The Undead Legion marching had incurred enormous amounts of damage. With holy water, their whole body were engulfed in blue flames, literally laying on the ground whilst on fire.

“The coldness of ice, the endurance, slowing and broken. ICE ENCHANTMENT!”

“Unstoppable wind, sharp breeze, slicing the strength. WINDSLICE ENCHANTMENT!”

“The unquenchable image of sparks, hot strength, and flames.
FIRE ENCHANTMENT!”

Lifting their bows, the Dark Elves temporarily enchanted the orcs’ weapons. Following the Dark Elves, the necromancers also used their magic.

“Boiling blood, show me your power and lose your head!
BLOODLUST!

“Kuwaag!”

The Orcs had gone berserk. The necromancers’ magic was accepted. In exchange for the magic granting tremendous strength, there were serious aftereffects. The orcs’ bloodlust eyes became bloodshot with red while their muscles swelled and tendons strained.

“Chwiaag!”

Brandishing their glaives, the Undead soldiers climbed the walls with matchless valour, clinging to the giant monsters.

Hundreds of Orcs leap on one of the monsters.

There were absolutely no tactics involved.

There were signs that made them realize they could only half

recover, due to the holy water, and thus could not handle an all-out frontal attack.

Depending on which god each denomination was dedicated to, the attributes of the water were slightly different.

The denomination dedicated to the Battle God was good at healing wounds and enhancing strength. The denomination of the Goddess Freya, who loved art and abundance, had the ability to subdue the Undead.

Puwoogh!

Giant rhinos rushed to the front, kicking and trampling the Orcs.

Kuung! Kuung!

The rhinos made the surroundings shake, as if there was an earthquake. Even with their large thighs and legs, the Orcs had to avoid the rhinos by rolling their bodies.

“Block!”

The faces of the Orcs guarding the wall changed into a deadly pale look. The giant rhinos were rushing towards the walls!

The rhinos were larger than fifteen meters, even though the walls were solid, the power of the rhinos was enough to crumble

the walls.

“Fire!”

“Take nothing for granted!”

The Dark Elves shot arrows, but most of their power was lost and fell near the rhinos. The Serpa Witches riding the backs of the rhinos using their defensive magic were to blame.

Weed witnessed this.

The rhinos that came running were incurring heavy damage on the Orcs.

At least a few hundred Orcs will die, but if I let there be serious damage, then the overall morale will be lowered.

“Dark Elves, use enlarge magic. Summon trees.”

In accordance with Weed’s command, the Dark Elves casted a spell.

“Enlarge!”

“Summon trees!”

Lush trees sprung up around their feet. Deep and long leg-like roots began walking toward the Undead soldiers, brushing them off violently.

And so the rhinos were intercepted. Because of the enlarge magic, the rhinos' legs and bodies were enclosed by large, grown bushes.

Kueuoh!

The Rhinos roared, struggling to tear out.

The Dark Elves were constantly stopping the rhinos using plants, while the Serpa Witches hurled magic at them.

On the other side, the ancient Undead soldiers wielding their swords and axes were relentless. Whenever they waved their weapons, the Orcs lost their lives. However, after the death of one Orc, two to three Orcs grouped together to fight. All the Orcs growled, coming down the mountain to fight.

At this time, the hunters went out.

“We have to get this done.”

“I will take on the rhinos.”

Those who do not get stronger will not be able to survive in the Plains of Despair!

While killing monsters, the hunters came close to having a bloody death!

The smiths were mobilized to repair the orcs' weapons while the hunters stayed brave waiting for them.

At this moment, Weed was willing to use them.

“We have to catch the Witches. For the peace and security of the village, fight the Undead Legion.”

“Okay.”

Each of the hunters packed their bags with weapons and went down. Three of the four rhinos jumped through the plants and trees.

Valiantly, the hunters threw their spears at the Serpa Witches!

Holding themselves in an arch formation, the hunters aimed at the rhinos' eyes.

Human, dark elf, Orc, necromancer!

Combining all their strength to fight the Undead Legion!

They have become more vulnerable due to the holy water and arrows, presenting a chance.

While the Orc fighters healed slightly, the remaining Orc scouts and soldiers one-sidedly slayed the Undead soldiers.

The Orcs were in the front lines to prevent enemies from reaching the Dark Elves who were constantly preventing their bowstrings from snapping. While the Orcs fought, arrows flew above them.

Kkeueooh!

From the ancient soldiers to the Serpa Witches riding the rhinos, hundreds of arrows flew and upon impalement, they became stuck.

Qoowooung!

Before long, the rhinos had gone beyond their limits, cried out and fell to the ground. The Serpa Witches, with their unusually low vitality, died, helplessly crushed under the rhinos. However, the Witches' bodies survived and rose even without their spirits inside thanks to their magic.

“From death, come into being, newly alive, death take colour, death perform, death we have carried out, O comrades awaken. Dead rise!”

The dead Orcs became Undead. The tens of thousands of Orcs and ancient Undead soldiers that died during the battle were quickly revived as undeads. The enemies had further increased.

“Attack. Disregard that they have been turned into Undead and focus on attacking the Undead Legion!”

Weed was willing to sacrifice the inevitable. It was due to selection and concentration.

If dead Orcs or Dark Elves were transformed to Undead, you can never win. With the size of the enemies increased, the fight will be more difficult. Besides the Undead being constantly revived, this was not the case.

Instead, however, it appeared that for the first time the Undead Legion was weakening.

The ancient Undead soldiers being dealt by the silver arrows and holy water received heavy blows. The holy water was corrosive to the Undead, weakening their strength. It was the same for the giant monsters.

The Undead Legion, which could be called the true main force, was incurring serious damage.

“Calling Death Knight, Calling Vampire Lord!”

Death Knight Van Hawk!

Vampire Lord Tori!

Weed summoned the two.

The Death Knight can be summoned at any time and will fight as your comrade.

The Vampire Lord is often difficult to use when called out. Whenever power is consumed, the need to have blood is not a very good thing. If you do not compensate for the blood, he becomes increasingly weakened, stamina is reduced, etc.

A bloodsucking vampire has its advantages and weaknesses. Fresh and un-dried blood is necessary.

“You called, Master.”

“That’s your enemy. Go and fight.”

Weed pointed a finger to the Undead Legion.

"Dark Knight has awoken from the darkness. I hear your command."

The Death Knight keenly followed like a honed knife. Heading towards the giant monsters to assault them.

A loyal knight.

Since Weed had beaten him to death, the Death Knight absolutely obeyed Weed's command.

“I have no interest where blood does not flow, but those Witches are still alive. However, they are not to my taste.”

Tori's black cape flapped as he spoke. It might be because he was born a vampire, but he favored women, especially maidens.

“Gaza!”

Tori jumped into the battle with vampires under his command.

A true-blooded vampire clan of a hundred!

In the past he had up to a thousand, but now he only needed a tenth. And because the vampires had not been born for long, many were still weak.

If you were to disregard their toxicity, strong vitality, and other racial characteristics, and only in terms of levels, they would be only around 120.

Vampires, too, grew over time while hunting.

Therefore the True Blood Vampires, despite their usual reputations, went for the giant monsters instead of the Serpa Witches.

“Mist of Disaster!”

“Hand of Death!”

Vampires were similar to or weaker than Orcs, but they had strong vitality. They fought by clawing monsters with their nails, while using various black magic.

Tori was also the biggest asset. Multiple winds bound together and a tornado arose.

“Blade Tornado!”

The technique that made even the Paladins fly away was used.

Like leaves, the giant monsters and ancient Undead soldiers were caught up in the swirling tornado and fell.

And in a flash, they were massacred by the Orcs and Dark Elves.

“Stone Curse!”

The monsters that encountered Tori's eyes literally turned to stone. His petrification specialty was a bitter curse.

Tori also concentrated on keeping the monsters and Serpa Witches in check.

With the Witches occupied by Tori, the Undead no longer increased.

Meanwhile, the Orcs and Dark Elves earnestly brought damages to the Undead Legion.

Asserting the situation, Weed narrowed his eyes.

‘This is not good.’

Tori was also a vampire. Even though he had strong vitality and huge amounts of mana, his high-level techniques used lots of mana. Understandably, if he was tired, he wouldn't demonstrate the ability of a level 400 monster.

Weed looked down from his place on the rock. Mapan was there watching the battle develop, clenching his two fists with excitement.

“Mapan.”

“Yes?”

"Would you like me to guide you to a good place to clearly watch the battle?"

"Really? Of course I'd like ... No, wait a minute!"

Mapan suddenly had a bad feeling. In his experience, when Weed gave favours, there would always unfailingly be a reason.

However, he hoped it would just be his imagination.

‘Surely nothing bad will happen, right? He says he’ll prepare me a good spot. But I’ll ask just in case.’

Mapan asked with a suspicious face.

“Do I need to pay you for this spot?”

If it’s Weed, he could have easily taken money for the spot!

He asked since he understood him very well.

“No, it is free.”

“Free!”

Mapan was no different from Weed in that his favourite word was "free."

"If it's free then it's tempting, but surely there must be something bad about it, right?"

"Yes, it is extremely dangerous. You may die."

If the Undead Legion were not defeated in this battle, he would die anyway.

Watching the battle already put his life at risk, so it was something Mapan did not particularly mind.

"Yes. Then, I'd like to see the battle in this good spot of yours. Where is it?"

"Right over there."

Weed pointed to the place immediately next to Tori.

"What's that"

"Now, go!"

Unnoticed, a hand slipped between them, and took Mapan's body up into the air with a whoosh.

A Wyvern flew down and grasped his legs before taking flight again.

“Uwaaaaaaa!”

Mapan screamed. Immediately beneath him, were the countless heads of the Orcs.

They all held their glaives upright!

Next to the arcs of arrows, the magic of the Dark Elves came by.

Their flames grazed past, causing Mapan's face to heat up.

“Whew, I barely survived.”

The magic had narrowly missed him, and he was only barely able to sigh in relief.

“Waa, this is amazing!”

Mapan's mouth widened as his eyes took in the memorable landscape.

Flames shot everywhere. Magic exploded, as the ancient Undead soldiers fought against the Orcs.

“This view really is great.”

Mapan was a little thankful to Weed.

His feet were caught by the Wyvern and he was hanging upside-down, and even if he was in considerable danger, the present fighting was certainly thrilling and fun to watch.

A wyvern could fly around the sky to where you wanted to see the battle, so it really was a good spot.

But in actuality, the Wyvern clutching his feet had no idea where to fly.

Mapan had trouble thinking up there.

That question was soon resolved.

Hwirik!

The Wyvern flung him in mid-air without a sign of regret.

"Uwaaaaaaa! Somebody help me!"

Mapan began to fall towards the ground. Also, of all places, he would land straight between the battle between the Serpa Witches

and the vampire Tori!

The Witches, whose faces were as jet-black as the Dark Elves, had various of gems embedded where their hair should have been!

In addition, an eerie aura emanated.

“Kihehehel!”

Mapan panicked.

He was afraid of falling into the ground and the thought of being caught by the Witches. If he was caught by the Witches, he’d face all kinds of curses, and might even be trampled to death by a rhino.

But then, Weed yelled with Lion's Roar.

“Tori! Catch Mapan!”

“I shall comply with thy request.”

Tori ran, jumped, and snatched Mapan in the air.

For a moment, due to the weight, it seemed that they were going to dangerously crash, but with a flap of the cape, they managed to safely land .

“Kkueek!”

Mapan felt his stomach churning.

‘Still alive.’

Yet, he stole a glance with half-closed eyes.

Directly in front of him was Tori's pale face.

A boss-class monster over level 400, the Vampire Lord Tori!

To Mapan, it was hardly conceivable to even dare to hunt such a monster.

As soon as Tori sat Mapan down on the ground, the surrounding ancient Undead soldiers unceremoniously attacked them. As inexperienced as Mapan was, he had never seen a battle fought this way before.

‘Euuu!’

Weak-minded merchant Mapan. Chattering teeth clacked. And monsters were all around. It was crowded with Undead.

Mapan clung to Tori in order to survive.

Giant monsters, ancient Undead soldiers and Serpa Witches, were dying right before Mapan.

It really was the best location to watch, for it felt like he was participating in the battle himself.

“Yeah!”

Mapan was soon cheering.

He immersed himself in the battle. Selling his death! He wouldn't regret dying if it was caused by watching this direct combat experience.

He also heard Weed speaking to Tori.

"Eat sparingly! You shouldn't die because you're well-protected!"

At first, Mapan could not understand what he meant.

‘What are you eating sparingly?’

But as soon as he was able realize the meaning.

Jjuuuuk!

Something caused an eerie feeling to run up his neck!

Tori had his bloodsucking fangs stabbed on the nape of his neck.

Whenever health and mana were low, it allowed instant lunches!

Weed gave Mapan sightseeing of the battle as the reason.

*

The necromancers were holding their own against the Serpa Witches, casting black magic to generate Undead. They tried to make the Orcs or the dark elves' corpses into Undead before the Witches could.

Without stopping, the Priests were engaged in blessing the arrows that were rapidly sent flying into the sky.

Some Dark Elves formed a separate group.

Their mission was to recover the arrows that had already been shot!

This was to regain the arrows and maintain a constant supply for the Elves.

“Cannot believe that us two noble males must do such a trivial

mission.”

Of course, they did not forget to do it while grumbling.

The silver arrows and the holy water played a major role in weakening the strength of the Undead Legion. The ancient Undead soldiers covered with holy water were unable to use even half their power, and the silver arrows led them to their demise.

“Karichwi, the silver arrows are all out.”

But it eventually reached the limit. The arrows had been used as sparingly as possible, so the end of them was inevitable.

Weed gave orders.

“Then, shoot the fire arrows. Chwiik!”

“It’ll cause fire.”

“It doesn’t matter. Chwiit!”

“I know.”

It was far from the dark elves’ nature to protect and value life. Contrary to the regular Elves, the Dark Elves were often quarrelsome and greedy.

“Shoot the fire arrows.”

“Ooohhh!”

The Dark Elves, agreeing with the idea, shot the fire arrows towards the enemies. Some hit the ancient Undead soldiers right on mark, but most of them ended up hitting bushes or trees.

Hwareureuk!

The flames were spreading, burning the dense forests.

The destruction of nature!

Arson!

Destroying Mother Nature recklessly, decisively!

Since they had firewood stacked at the bottom of the mountain, the fire spread quickly. The forest fire was not large because there were patches of ground with cut trees here and there, but soon it would go up in flames. Unavoidably, the ancient Undead soldiers had to stick together in one place.

They tried to forcefully break through the walls, but the Orcs desperately blocked them.

Grouping them together was the goal, as from the sky, the powerful holy water could be poured on where they were!

Sprinkling holy water on the bodies of the ancient Undead soldiers caused their bones and flesh to corrode.

The holy water was evenly distributed to the trees as pools of it surrounded them. The powers of the holy water, which was granted by the Goddess Freya as the symbol of abundance, made the plants grow.

The plants that had grown held onto the legs of the ancient Undead soldiers, while the tree branches hit the giant monsters.

Again, the Orcs suffered great damage, but the Undead Legion continued to be decimated.

The weakened ancient Undead soldiers were slaughtered, while the giant monsters were attacked by the surrounding Orcs. The Serpa Witches were finished being taken care of by Tori and the dark elves' magic.

A skeleton from the Undead legion dressed in robes emerged from the pit.

Red jewels were studded on his skull's forehead!

The Lich Shire was emerging.

“I will dye the ground and water in darkness. Undead Legion, advance. Kill the living. Make them our comrades!”

Shire’s roar rang out without hesitation.

*

Weed quickly looked over the Lich Shire’s body the moment he appeared on the surface.

He made a rough estimation of his assets.

A lustrous black and blue robe, with ancient glyphs painted, that gave the feeling that he had small wings!

His fingers covered in jewelled rings, and a golden crown covering his head.

In one hand was a book of magic, in the other a white cane.

The Undead was wearing an unbelievably gorgeous attire.

Gulp!

Weed swallowed his drool.

It was like staring at delicious food.

‘Those are Moon’s shoes. They increase traveling speed, and, at the same time, significantly improve agility. That robe only came out once until now, the magical Vine Robe. That robe specializes in attack magic.’

He couldn’t distinguish the other equipment though.

Only one thing was certain, the Lich Shire had come out with REALLY expensive equipment.

‘If I stripped him down, I will at least earn ten million won easily! I have to end up with at least one of them.’

Wearing those items was like a death sentence in itself.

Quest-related goods apart, looks like drop items will also be worth their fair share of money.

Weed took full command of the army.

“Our last prey has appeared, chwik. All out assault! Orcs prepare for our last battle!”

Just the walls separated the Orcs of the ancient Undead soldiers and the giant monsters!

They began a large scale assault.

“Heave! Heave!”

“Push the walls. Chichik!”

The shabbily constructed walls began to fall apart!

The Orcs were all around the wall pushing them together.

All just as Weed had planned.

Their only hope they had to win against the Undead Legion, was to wait for the last moment to execute this plan.

The Orcs pushed against the walls with both hands.

Chests broad, faces ugly, struggling desperately.

Little by little the walls were being tilted towards the bottom of the mountain.

Then they suddenly fell out of their hands as they collapsed.

Kwareeeeeeeuuuuuuung!

Chunks of rock quickly fell down, filling the previously dug ditches.

The remaining rocks continued to roll down the severe slope of the mountain.

The walls successively collapsed one after another!

The rocks rolling down the mountain side bounced.

Some of the Orcs couldn't avoid being crushed by the landslide of falling rocks, or lost balance and started rolling down the mountain as well.

A huge landslide of rocks struck the Undead Legion.

“Kill that Lich!”

The remainder of the Orc forces charged at the Undead Legion in order to kill the Lich Shire.

The Dark Elves casted magic and the Necromancers casted curses.

“Corpse Explosion!”

They destroyed the corps in advance, in order to let the Lich Shire revive them.

It was a pincer attack!

This was far from a righteous and fair competition.

The Lich Shire, no matter how powerful, if the Dark Elves, Priests, and the Vampire Tori attacked together he couldn't survive.

“Cowardice! One-on-one, this wouldn't even be a fight!”

The Shire's voice, full of anger, was completely ignored by Weed.

There was no reason to argue over righteousness and justice, but sometimes it was the only way to win.

Fighting him alone was foolish with such numbers.

He did not notice that fighting with an overwhelming majority was much more fun!

It was the Shire's fault that he appeared at the end of the battle to die alone.

“Know your own weight. GRAVITY.”

The Shire was casting a large variety of gravity-based spells.

The Wyverns that had been flying in the sky and pouring holy water, were caught up in the magic and fell to the ground. The Rosenheim soldiers that the Wyverns had been carrying lost their lives when the Wyverns fell to the ground.

The Shire's magic shot down the four Wyvern groups, and got about six thousands Orcs. Around three thousand Dark Elves also died.

The Lich's ability to display that extent of power, while restraining Tori, the necromancers, Dark Elves, and Priests was, to a degree, alarming.

Whenever Shire casted a spell, an explosion occurred and Orcs died by the dozens. They were switching one by one to weaken him, but they were still suffered great damage due to his monstrous strength.

It was so strong that soldiers of the Rosenheim Kingdom were forced to be evacuated.

Soldiers provided by Rosenheim Kingdom, Wyverns provided by sacrifice of art stat and level.

“Wyvern forces fly high. Tori, completely harass him, Dark Elf forces outpour magic!”

Thanks to the power of the holy water, however, Shire was weakened.

The Lich's life vitality was sealed in the vessel, and would never die unless by the force of divine power.

The holy water was being poured, the Priests used divinity magic, which was his weakness.

“Daemon Spear!”

Shire called out a black spear, and, controlling it with his finger, hurled it.

“Gaargh!”

Priests were pierced by the passing spear!

“Royal Knights, Death Knight, Orcs, protect the Priests.”

The Goddess Freya Priests appeared to be the lifeline.

Weed protected the Priests while the Wyverns, as much as possible, sprinkled holy water as a barrage.

Shire was slowly accumulating damage. He continued casting

spells, but his power was gradually weakening.

Even though Weed was safe, the Lich Shire was to be caught, to be used to cover investment costs.

Though the battle had been going on for a long time now and was nearing the end, the Shire had high vitality, but his mana had been reduced to the lowest.

“Gueergh! How dare you!”

The Shire’s voice was filled with anger.

He could not fly in the sky, because he could not cast the spell. He was not able to cast even this simple magic because his mana had been depleted. His skeleton was cracking and his vitality too was going away!

However, Shire did not die quietly.

“Van Hawk! Tori too! Have you forgotten your pledge of allegiance to Master Bar Khan?”

“We found a new master.”

“Master Bar Khan is waiting for you. Come. Together with me, let us serve Bar Khan, and let this land be ours.”

It had become an emergency situation to tempt the Vampire Lord and Death Knight.

“I cannot.”

The Death Knight just cut it off and declined, but Vampire Lord Tori's mind was being swayed.

“Though I had already apostatised, will I still be accepted?”

“Master Bar Khan is our hope. You will be given great generosity and tolerance.”

“Then.....”

“Yes. I'm willing to work together with you. Kill those alive. Life is cumbersome and should be harvested.”

Together with Tori, the Shire no longer hesitated to attack. The situation had haply gone to the enemy!

The Vampire Lord was more than level 400, if he possibly moved to the other side, it was going to be very serious.

There were living Orcs and Dark Elves, it was heaven for the vampire who had the means to constantly replenish mana and vitality. The apostatised Vampire Lord Tori was that dangerous.

“Forward!”

Weed gave orders to the Dark Elves.

With what was left of his vitality, Shire out poured magic.

A tremendous explosion shook and made the earth tremble!

But Shire stubbornly survived.

His skull was cracking, his body had caught fire. Lich showed monstrous vitality even though he had a broken arm.

Weed ran like lightning.

“Quadruped leap!”

Top running skill that enables running like a gale!

In a short period of time, that form severely consumed stamina, but he was not in any position to choose.

Weed literally ran his way through the Orcs. And jumped to the front of Shire.

Since Lich had grown his body to nearly five metres tall, there was no danger of his body becoming astray. Weed pulled out his

sword, and there was a piercing sound.

“Sword Kaiser!”

The orcs’ vitality was so depleted, they simply look like herbivorous!

He watched Lich Shire, he was placing his life at stake at this time, to deliver his present skill that was his best one.

“This guy!”

His conversion attacks hit Shire, but he still did not die.

Weed has tested his technique against the giant Yetis to the point of being able give a lesson about it. Even though great amounts of mana were consumed, the giant monsters were incurred vast losses to their vitality.

Yet, to eliminate the Shire, he ran short.

Black smoke similar to energy escaped his body and, in spite of being battered and looking like hell, he moved.

“Of the ice!”

Wanting to squeeze out the last of his mana, at the hands of the

bony Shire, crystallised ice was made.

With the sword in his chest, there was no doubt that the attack would fly towards Weed.

Weed shouted.

“Dark Elves, ignore me and attack!”

Either I die here or we all die.

Already the Dark Elves prepared and launched a magic assault.

From all directions, hundreds and thousands of magic attacks were coming.

The magic assault had completely devastated the place where Weed and the Shire stood.

Hit by a series of ice magic attack spells. Body is freezing. Movement speed decreased.

Your body is burning. If the flame isn't put out quickly you will get severe damage.

By the lightning attacks, your body is temporarily paralyzed.

You have a serious injury. You are completely disabled!

Weed and the Shire were battered by the magic at the same time.

Weed clung to the Lich to avoid the possibility of him escaping.

The special effects produced by the magic appeared in a window but, most important to Weed, his health was quickly depleting.

The Shire's body, battered by magic, was engulfed in light and disappeared.

Your level has increased.

Your level has increased.

Your level has increased.

Your level has increased.

Your level has increased...

Through pure instinct, Weed's hand reached out to where the Lich had disappeared.

Before verifying what loot he had grabbed, a window message opened.

Died from loss of health.

Cannot log in for 24 hours.

Skills and levels will decrease as a result of player's death.

-Boots and hat were broken due to the deterioration of durability.

It will not be possible to repair broken goods.

Chapter 4: Quest

“Ahhhh!”

Lee Hyun, got out of the capsule and thrashed about in bitterness from having to die at at the very last moment.

Although he was prepared for death due to the difficulty of the mission, so he wasn't in the least concerned about having lost his life, but he wanted a chance to confirm the items that he had picked up.

“It definitely must have dropped something good!”

A boss-class monster.

A monster similar to the Lich Shire would probably never appear in front of him again. Even if another one was found, the monster would probably be well beyond the abilities of any group. After having killed such a monster, he hadn't even been able to confirm what it had dropped.

“If it was a robe that dropped, it would be big.”

Lee Hyun paced nervously around the room.

Vine's Magic Robe.

It had only appeared once, and its price had not been announced. It hadn't appeared on any auction site, instead a buyer had appeared through the Dark Gamer's Union. Even if it was for auction, not many people could buy afford such an expensive item anyway. Therefore it was more common to procure elite items through the Dark Gamer's Union.

"Robe. Robe. Robe!" Lee Hyun desperately prayed that he had acquired the robe.

"I know I got a hold of something....Whew." Lee Hyun sighed deeply.

There had never been a time, in the game, where things had gone right for him.

Even if he had been hit by a massive scale attack, the fact that his boots and hat had been broken, even after having been maxed out in durability through his repair skill, was a symbol of his bad luck.

"It doesn't have to be a robe. Shoes! Yes, Kurdal's Shoes wouldn't be so bad either."

Lee Hyun lowered his expectations.

In fact, even if the Lich Shire had been dressed in those items, there was no guarantee that those were the items that would have dropped. The term 'japtem' didn't exist for nothing. Even if he had

picked it up, he could have lost it when he had died.

“I wonder, what about the quest...”

Lee Hyun sighed.

There was no way to find anything out.

With him dead, it raised the question of how the war turned out, and whether he had completed the quest.

He would only be able to confirm everything after logging in again.

“I can’t help it. I’ll just rest for now.”

Rather than having to wait anxiously for a day, he chose to put his mind at ease. No matter what he did, he wouldn’t be able to find out anything until the suspension is lifted.

Since he had been preparing for the quest, he hadn’t been able to sleep properly, so his accumulated sleep deprivation kicked in. It was better to just sleep with his mind at ease.

*

People who watched the Orc Quest from the Hall of Fame, were

waiting the video results of the large-scale war.

Numerous posts were popping up.

- Why has the video not been uploaded?

- Considering the time the video had been uploaded the last time, the quest should've progressed by now.

- Aah. I'm curious about the result.

At first, there were a lot of people filled with hope.

They were content with simply watching the adventures of the legendary Weed. The user that had climbed to the zenith of the 'Continent of Magick'. A game that had reigned on top for twenty years.

Wizards were filled with hope of finally being able to advance to the Necromancer class.

The people were not only interested in the large scale war, but also in the prestigious A-class quest. Even C-class quests gave a sense of accomplishment when finished, so they were curious about what an A-class quest would be like. Therefore, the Hall of Fame was filled with millions of people. They were waiting to see the video as soon as it came up.

However, with the Orc's grand quest not progressing, and another video attracted the attention of the waiting people.

The Crimson Wing Guild

It was one of the top ten most prestigious guilds in the continent of Versailles. The leader Terose released a special video.

The video only spanned five minutes!

Although the video was too short to announce a quest or display a good fight, it still attracted people, simply because of Terose's name.

Since it would take a while to be able to watch the large-scale war of the Undead Legion, they had no problem watching a short video.

The video showed people entering ancient ruins.

“It's the Barbarian Warrior, Pline-nim.”

“The Feared Assassin Dane is there, too!”

“The Magma Witch, Do-Gwang is there as well!”

All the strongest members of the Crimson Wing Guild were

present.

Paladins, Priests, Thieves, Wizards, Adventurers, Assassins, Bards, Warriors, Summoners, Shamans, Rangers.

Beside these classes people commonly chose, there was also the witch class with reduced vitality but increased magic power!

The witch who fought with a single dagger without ever retreating, a man completely crazy with daggers, Do-Gwang! The man said to live in a fortress full of monsters, assassinating them every moonless night, Dane!

Even famous users and unique professions were members.

Needless to say, The Crimson Wing Guild was large and famous throughout the continent.

These rare, high level users had all gathered and were going into the ruins. Just this fact alone made other users excited.

Terose was clad in a crimson armor, spoke with his cold and unique voice to attract attention.

- Finally, we have reached the tomb of the Scorpion King, after tracking down the tiniest clue, we have, at last, found it.

Even while Terose was speaking, guild members were entering

the ruins.

Terose paused for a brief moment, after which he opened his mouth again.

- No matter how harsh the road or the obstacle lying before us may be, we will definitely overcome it. I will put my life on the line to solve this quest. Only those that do not lose hope may prevail. Let us depart, the A-Class quest is waiting. Scorpion King's Tomb, I will beat you.

Another A-Class quest!

It was more than enough to make people enthusiastic.

Terose, after saying one more line, disappeared into the ruins along with his guild members.

- Behold our unyielding courage and honor. From now on, watch our fight, our spilled blood and our honorable victory.

The video ended there.

The meaning of his message remained unclear. There were many questions left unanswered about the nature of the A-Class quest, but soon it was answered.

Ten minutes after the video had been uploaded into the Hall of

Fame, users discovered that CTS Media was broadcasting the quest of the Crimson Wing guild. On top of that, it was a live coverage of the Crimson Wing Guild exploring the ruins.

*

‘We’re managing well.’

Terose was showed a fully satisfied smile.

In fact, they had already started exploring the ruins some time ago. On their first attempt they had lost some men, but together with their losses they had found out the way to the door leading to the stone chamber. However, due to not having the necessary sacrifice for the altar, they had to return.

‘It’s time to complete this quest.’

Terose pretended to survey the ruins along with this guild members. The thieves and assassins opened up the path, while warriors and paladins prepared for danger with shields raised.

“Kuaak!”

“Watch out. It’s a trap!”

The guild fought dangerous monsters and destroyed deadly traps. Sometimes they had to face large monsters, which resulted in a few

deaths.

“Don’t give up. The real danger isn’t even here yet”

“Keep going. Something of this degree cannot stop us, the Crimson Wings.”

“The blood we’ve spilled will help us reach our goal”

“Don’t let your comrades die in vain. Don’t give up here!”

All around, high level users exclaimed frivolously.

Terose had mobilized over a thousand high-level users of the Crimson Wing Guild, four times the number of people in the last expedition. Therefore the average level was lower than usual. Still, they mobilized as much users with a level of over 310 as possible.

‘We can’t afford to miss this opportunity.’

Terose took full advantage of the quest to promote his guild.

Broadcasting a difficult expedition 24/7 would greatly increase the guild’s fame. Additionally, by completing an A-class quest, they would be able to establish themselves as a strong guild to spectators.

‘If this quest turns out well, the guild would be able to spread their influence on a larger scale. First, raise funds to increase our size. If the newcomers level up high enough, the title as the strongest guild can be seized from the Hermes. We, the Crimson Wing, will dominate the continent.’

Terosé puffed up his chest.

His ambition knew no bounds.

"Aaaaah!"

“Put more strength into it! Priests, heal our injured colleagues!”

The Crimson Wing Guild pierced through the hard way.

In reality, they had already advanced a great deal during the last expedition, but they acted as if they knew nothing of the dungeon, and faked their hardships in order to gain more viewership.

The guild members worked hard on their act. They had died knowing that it was coming. They had deliberately placed less men than needed to clear the paths; of course, they had already promised a substantial compensation to those that died.

“Even if I die, the expedition must continue.”

“Yeah, trust us”

Terose purposely took his guild members deeper into the dungeon while the Dark Gamers, positioned at the rear of the expedition, could do nothing but smile cynically.

“They’re doing such useless stuff”

“Just increasing the number of people will only increase the losses.”

“That’s all just wisdom of life. You can’t do such a thing with being just a little crafty.”

“It doesn’t concern us since we just have to receive what we worked for. But the fact that we can’t fight is a bit unsatisfying.”

The Dark Gamers followed while complaining.

*

The Crimson Wing Guild finally arrived at the altar after having gotten lost numerous times. It was the entryway to the deeper parts of the ruin, the tomb of King Belsos.

“We have finally arrived.”

Terose trembled with excitement.

The quest they had received required them to retrieve the horn flute of King Belsos. But the tomb's interior was also said to have been filled with rare swords and magical items.

Terose took a look around.

A thousand users had entered, but only about 650 remained. Almost 350 had died while coming here. Compared to the last expedition, in which they had kept to the correct path, it was a rather high number. Even at that time they had lost 45 men near the entrance, and the number grew until reaching 130 deaths by the time they had reached the altar.

Since this time the number of weaker users had increased, it resulted in receiving higher damage. However, this was an A-Class quest, so the extent of the damage taken was to be expected, hence, their expressions did not falter.

“Let's get started. Everybody get ready”

Terose placed 7 scorpion sculptures on the altar. At that moment, the large door carved with a crimson scorpion, started opening with a loud sound.

Kruuuguuung!

Nervously, the guild members held their weapons closed to their bodies. In the ruins, the use of magic was impossible, so the users

had to rely on their physical strength.

It was full of beasts unheard of in normal monster books.

“Monsters.”

“Everyone prepare for battle!”

“Let’s fight ‘till death.”

“We can’t go back after coming this far!”

Terose entered the battle and commanded his guild members.

The Dark Gamers weren't there for show, either. They formed a circle to defend themselves, Priests in the middle and combat specialized classes protecting them.

Even though the formation was completed very quickly, some of the demon beasts managed to reach them.

Kuuhuung!

The beasts cried.

Due to their ferocious attack, the expedition continuously lost more of its members. If they had stayed near the narrow door,

instead of taking their circle formation, they would have achieved much better result. Because they relied on what they had always done, they lost more lives than necessary.

But because the Crimson Wing Guild mobilized all their power, the warriors, paladins, and swordsmen led the battle on the front lines.

“We won!”

Only about 480 remained after winning the battle. Many had fallen yet again, but they were able to come out victorious.

“Let’s go in”

Terose hurried inside. The opened door had been shining with a brilliant light.

The members of the expedition that had entered the demon beast’s lair could do nothing but gape in wonder.

"Iyaaahh!"

“Treasure.”

In the depths of the room was a gigantic golden scorpion statue, and various treasures were piled on or near it, forming a mountain.

“It’s gotta be at least a half a million gold.”

“Half a million? This has got to be at least a million.”

Money wasn’t the only thing that had made the expeditioners excited. There were items scattered everywhere. Scattered treasures that were piled up shone brightly.

Terose easily found the horn flute lying in front of the golden scorpion statue.

“This is it.”

Terose raised the horn flute. Their mission was to bring the flute back to Count Grace.

‘With this, the quest will be complete.’

It had been pretty difficult, but they had safely reached their goal.

Terose’s future looked bright.

The CTS media was broadcasting this right now. At least a million people were watching, perhaps even ten million.

Once the A-class quest is finished, people's minds will be imprinted with an unforgettable scene. The video shown by media would be watched repeatedly, creating a glorious image.

The Crimson Wing's supremacy would only be a matter of time.

Then a pure white sword caught Terose's eye. The sword's hilt was engraved with flame-shaped patterns. Although there was countless of treasures in there, among it was something particularly refined.

'That's unique. Maybe it's the king's sword, but I'm not quite sure.'

Terose's eyes glinted with greed.

No warrior should be too greedy when getting a better sword, but they held great pride in improving their maximum damage output rather than focusing on their defence.

Every sword is significantly different in terms of their damage output. Naturally, an excellent sword couldn't be compared to a normal sword. Depending on the job, alignment or even the monster's characteristic, swords would vary even further. Against monsters of the fire attribute you should use ice-type weapons and against dark-attributed monsters, a holy weapon was the way to go. Therefore, warriors would normally possess up to three or four different types of swords.

‘For the Crimson Wing to reign over the entire Versailles Continent, it is necessary to possess an excellent sword. A sword of this prestige will greatly increase my reputation.’

Terose silently fixed his eyes on the sword. Being the head of the guild, he desired to possess an excellent sword. The beautiful sword appeared to be a work of art. With his dignity and prestige, only a perfect sword was worthy of him.

Then the guild saw Terose and the sword.

“Terose go ahead, take it.”

“Sir Terose, you have suffered a great deal, so you deserve the sword.”

Terose’s guild officers encouraged him to take the sword. Underneath the sword, they discovered an signboard.

After looking at the sword for a long time, it gave off an intense sensation.

“Hey, there’s something written on it!”

Sabron deciphered the characters.

Take the sword.

“It says take the sword.”

“Me, take the sword?”

Terose didn't look enthusiastic on the surface, but he was secretly excited as he reached for the sword.

If Weed had been there, he would have been suspicious five times over already! With such easy battles, they should have been suspicious of their surroundings. Considering how smoothly everything went, this A-class quest was too easy. They had only encountered a few dangerous battles.

In contrast to Weed, who had commanded his troops and led them into battle; that in itself, was an achievement. However, neither the Orcs nor the Dark Elves were able to use their full potential.

The enemies were far too weak. The difficulty of this quest couldn't even compare to the Undead Legion's quest. Furthermore, this quest stated nothing about acquiring a sword.

That moment Terose just grabbed the sword.

Flash!

The place was filled with treasures made out of gold.

“What’s going on?”

“The area is getting brighter.”

The people could not find where the light came from. After looking up, they found the source.

The Golden Scorpion had awakened.

“Fearlessly entering the tomb of Belsos - the great emperor of fire - with greedy intentions. The king is fed up with you fools. Those who trespass shall not be forgiven. A Fiery Retribution shall consume every one of you!”

Hwareureuk!

While holding onto the sword, Terose’s body burst into flames. Within moments, he turned to ashes and died.

Another disaster befell on the expedition.

Fire spirits!

Countless fire spirits appeared and attacked them all at once.

The expedition party failed to respond to the sudden situation and its battle formation became disorderly, until it finally

collapsed. While observing the expedition turning to ashes, the Golden scorpion said:

“Foolish mortals! You have aroused the wrath of King Belsos and have brought a curse of fire upon the continent.”

*

CTS media was broadcasting their adventure to millions of people.

The Crimson Wing guild crumbled at that moment. Greed caused the Crimson Wing guild to fail the quest and led them to their downfall.

At first, they didn't understand what the golden scorpion statue was saying. Then they realized that they had failed the quest.

People on Royal Road began to start posting furiously.

- Humidity is on the rise.

- The rays of sunlight suddenly intensified.

- It seems like the temperature rose by about 5 degrees.

The curse of King Belsos!

It created a heat wave.

The continent was hit by a sweltering heat wave all year long, turning it into a place of death.

Albeit briefly, it was a good moment for those who controlled the Elements of Fire, because the fire magic became powerful and prosperous. Even if they liked the fire element, that only lasted until the sweat ran down their spine. Before leaving on a hunt with colleagues, it was great to breathe in the cold air of dawn, which is now impossible because of the heat.

There was a tremendous outcry from users!

Accusations were made that the Crimson Wing guild caused this situation. The Crimson Wing guild, who was affiliated with the A-Class quest were punished for their pride and arrogance. The guild became stigmatized by their failure, so they were recognized anywhere they went.

Merchants and Traders alike refused to sell any of their merchandise to them, and players refused to party with them.

Allied guilds left one after another, turning their backs on them.

The once high reputed guild had now collapsed.

*

With his spare time, Lee Hyun washed his face and took long baths.

“I like summer.”

It was quite difficult to take a bath in the winter. First of all, the boiler had to use more power to heat up the water. With extra cost added to the electricity bills, he would never get rich. In contrast, the summer was really nice. He had the option of taking a cool bath.

After he finished taking a bath, he went onto the auction site.

Orc's Glaive, loads of Elven headbands, rare herbs that can be used as a special poison, and japtem.

With his tailoring and blacksmithing skills, he intended to use the ores and leathers he had accumulated during his journey throughout the Yuroki Mountains and Plains of Despair, so he didn't post them on the auction site. Rather than selling an unprocessed ore, he wanted to sell the items he made to players, as it was easier to find buyers for them.

He took a short rest and then he sent his sister to school.

Lee Hyun spent almost 24 hours daily, exploring Royal Road.

To gain experience and items in order to make money!

“Can I finally login to check what I got?”

It had been exactly 24 hours since he died.

*

The Director of KMC Media had been trying to contact Weed by making phone calls, and sending dozens of e-mails and private messages.

But to his distress, he had not gotten a single reply.

“Please read your damn e-mail!”

The KMC media director was a man of little patience. He was using every method available to him.

Then in the car, his eyes widened as he saw items from the Lich Shire available on the trading site.

“This is it, That’s what I’m talking about”

Weapons from Dark Elves and Orcs, leathers from Giant Monsters.

There's no doubt about it.

The director immediately made a bid on the items.

He bidded as much as 30 million won for just one Minotaurus' claw japtem.

*

Because Weed had died, he respawned in the nearest human village which was called The Village of Exiles.

The residents were busy, moving around with purpose and bright and vibrant expressions on their faces.

Hunter Kokundo was maintaining a shield.

“Hey, Weed. You're back”

“How did the war against the Undead Legion go?”

“We won, the Lich is dead.”

“And then?”

“After the battle ended we returned here, the villagers who once were slaves, came back as well. For now, the orcs and humans can get along without conflict. Although it’s only a temporary truce. Right now the Orcs are looking for their hero; Karichwi, and the necromancers are looking for you. They hope to depart for the world as soon as they are able to gather.”

With that last bit of information, Weed knew what to do in order to finish the quest.

“I see. I’ll go see them.”

“Thank you for protecting our village. It may not be much, but you will find open doors welcoming you in the Plains of Despair. We owe you a favor.”

Kokundo went back to polishing his shield.

Weed decided to pay the Necromancers a visit first.

“Stat Window!”

Character Name

Weed

Alignment

Neutral

Level

286

Profession

The Legendary Moonlight Sculptor

Title

Artisan With Exceptional Dexterity

Reputation

13645

Life

19230

Mana

9760

Strength

715+65

Agility

575+65

Stamina

134+65

Wisdom

136+65

Intellect

154+65

Fighting Spirit

323+65

Endurance

180+65

Fortitude

374+65

Art

447+145

Charisma

212+65

Leadership

492+65

Luck

5+65

Faith

96+435

Charm

39+65

Attack

2211

Defense

640

Magic Resistance

Fire

13%

Water

15%

Earth

25%

Black Magic

50%

He had gained 7 levels.

Even though he had not personally killed the Lich Shire, Weed had played a fairly decisive role. Thanks to that, he leveled up simultaneously. Even after dying his level had still been 286. However, contrary to his level, several other things had fallen.

Combat classes receive a rapid increase in strength, dexterity, or wisdom stat during their second job advancement. But sculptors didn't have such benefits, they had their craftsmanship instead.

A Sculptor is a class based mainly on art production. The fastest way to develop craftsmanship is to learn the different production skills, and then utilize their respective abilities and talents to create a variety of products.

Thanks to this, their physical and mental capabilities could be improved to be equal to those of the combat classes.

If one invested enough time, he could become strong enough to overpower any other players of the same level. However, the sculptor class had a downside: the skill levels.

When you die, the hard earned production skill experience would drop:

Advanced sculpting 13%, Cooking 10%, craftsmanship 16%. Sewing, blacksmithing, herbalism, fishing, sword grinding, armor polishing, bandaging, Ironing. These skills had all dropped by 5 to 7%. In terms of levels, it was comparable to losing two or three.

“Euu.”

Weed trembled with sadness.

How could the skills he had earned through all his grinding fall so much! But for now, it was time to confirm the most important thing. The items he had acquired from killing the Lich Shire!

He had to confirm what he got.

In silence, Weed stuck his hand inside his backpack.

One staff!

One jewel!

One Magic Tome!

It would have been an impossible task without nimbleness that allowed him to loot items in any situation.

Weed also lost a few things due to his death.

A small brazier used by Blacksmiths, and threads and needles used for sewing.

In terms of money, it hadn't been that big of a loss.

“There is no Vine's Robe. I'm guessing the magic book is a quest item...”

Weed was still anxious.

Even if there were a lot of dropped items, if they were useless, then he would have done all that for nothing.

“Identify!”

Weed decided to check the magic book to calm himself down.

Ttiring!

Bar Khan's handwritten Necromancer's Tome of Magic

Durability:30/30

A book of Black Magic that allows you to gain the ability to summon the Undead.

It contains methods of summoning the Undead, from the easiest ones to the most advanced.

Since it was written by the genius magician Bar Khan Demoph himself, it isn't too difficult to understand. However, to create and control the Undead, large amounts of mana were necessary, so use the skill with caution.

Restrictions:

Magic related profession.

Level: 300

Wisdom: 500

Mana: 8000

Able to advance to the Necromancer class.

Option:

Black Magic Resistance +25.

Ability to create undead +2.

With high intelligence, you will be able to create Undead Boss-level monsters.

Improves the Undead's vitality and increases resistance to holy magic.

It was an item worthy to be called the greatest in creating and training the Undead.

‘I can get a lot of money from this.’

Weed returned the tome to his bag, as it would be difficult to sell until there were more necromancers.

Although he had gained an elite item for the Necromancer class, in reality, the interest in the class was still minimal.

Even if the interest is small, it would still take time for people to advance to the Necromancer class, and no one would be able to use the tome for a while.

Once the advantages of being a Necromancer became known to the public, a large amount of people would change their class. However the physical weakness of the class was a serious issue.

Necromancers were unable to receive blessings or healings from holy magic. This was a big problem because of the low vitality most magic based classes possessed, which resulted in increasing their chances of dying by three to four times. Therefore the typical mage wouldn't be able to successfully become a necromancer.

With their faults, Necromancers might not fit into the typical party setting. Because Necromancers would summon many undead, the undead would be doing most of the killing. As safe as it may be, the experience gained would be lesser than normal. The Necromancer population would slowly bleed out, and eventually only Mages who enjoyed that play style would choose it.

Weed slowly took a deep breath and identified the staff.

“Identify!”

Saint's Staff:

Durability: 90/90

Attack: 15-20

The staff said to have been used by the Great Saint Gorian whenever he'd have a bad leg. It was crafted using light but sturdy Elf tree wood, but because of the thick layers of dirt, the engravings had become unrecognizable. It is imbued with the force of life.

Restrictions:

Holy type professions.

Also available to criminals and warlocks

Options:

If used by Priests +150 Faith.

Charm +30

Endurance +20

Reduced stamina consumption in rugged terrain.

Improve fame by 30% more when making donations.

Able to use devotion or sacrificial magic.

When used by a villain, the staff increases the power of darkness.

Devotion:

Consume all but 1% of life and mana.

Gives all members of the party a level higher tier blessing and protection magic.

Sacrifice:

By sacrificing your own life, up to 50 party members can be completely healed.

The staff that held the highest expectations!

“As I thought!”

The item was enough to make Weed release a sad sigh.

“Where am I suppose to sell this thing?”

A weapon even more evil than the bone-staves the Necromancers cast magic with. Before he had identified it, he had thought that it could be a good weapon for Priests. Because of their low strength, Priests were unable to use mace type weapons. They usually carried staves or holy items that increased their faith.

Who would want this staff?!

If it had been a sword, then its damage would have been

increased, but this staff didn't do anything other than augmenting personal stats.

“In this selfish world, things like values, devotion or sacrifice don't exist.”

Weed punched the ground out of anguish.

“I'd have rather not picked it up.”

Even so, the thought of throwing it away never crossed his mind.

He didn't have to sell it to a priest. Since it increased black magic as well, he could sell it to a villain or a warlock.

“Tools are tools. It's not the knife that's in the wrong, it's the person behind the knife.”

Finally, he looked at the gems he looted. When creating weapons or armor, gems enhanced their power!

They were tier 1 gems.

Tailoring, like blacksmithing, could recycle a variety of leathers. Depending on your skill mastery, the difference could be big. As for the value of the metal he had found, it required a lot of effort to be melted, even for an expert.

“With this I barely break even”

Weed’s mind was set to some extent.

Although the quest was complete, he had to invest 20 levels, 100 art stat, 70,000 gold. Quests were different from hunting, since performance had to be taken into consideration.

“If this was a chain quest, I’ll have to go to the necromancers to get it.”

Weed left the village and headed to the Yuroki mountains. Scattered debris and dug up dirt lay where the battle had been fought.

The ground showed obvious signs of struggle from the orcs, dark elves, and paladins.

The rhino horns had been looted, and the witches were gone by now.

After Weed had died, he had disappeared for 4 days, so all of the loot had already been taken.

“Still, I’m glad.”

He would be able to get his hands on special herbs. Higher quality herbs could be sold for a better price.

“I’ll be able to make more profit”

Weed’s eyes lit up when he found the herbs.

Deep in the mountains where herbs grew well, he will carefully harvest them all without missing a single one.

Pabababag!

With a knife, he dug the soil around the herb until its the root was uncovered. Then with a swipe of his hand, he pulled out the herb with a clump of soil still attached to it.

In the past, he would’ve found this job to be too tedious. The money made from herbs was marginal and it wasn’t necessary to put in so much effort. However, Weed had used up almost all of his money, so he was more covetous than usual.

“Money, money, money.”

Weed diligently inserted the herbs into bottles. Soon, his backpack was filled with bottles of herbs that needs to be fermented.

In the Yuroki Mountains, liquor was hard to come by.

The soldiers of Rosenheim and the Orcs were drinking together.

Exploiting the Helaine Cup by mixing Holy water and fruit juice to create an artificial liquor.

Using the Sacred relic of the Church of Freya for personal pleasure!

The holy water combined with herbs, produced a sweet aroma and flavor. When drunk, it went down well.

Since the quest had progressed well, gaining a lucrative income became a possibility. The mastering of various kinds of production skills had always helped, no matter which environment Weed had treaded upon.

“Sculptors live on the edge, if you don’t make money on the side or sell your sculptures then you’ll starve to death.”

This was why he dug out herbs so diligently.

- Weed!

Mapan whispered him.

Perhaps he survived the war after all and since then, he had been trying to whisper Weed.

-Yes, go ahead.

- I finally got through! Where are you now?
- The place where we fought the Lich.
- Oh, that great. I'll be there soon. Let's form a party when we get there.
- Party?
- Pale and the others are riding to Plains of Despair in order to see you. Let's meet up. I'll be there soon.

Weed was deeply touched.

'Too bad I didn't live up to the world'

The party traveling across the plains show their friendship and loyalty towards each other!

*

"Phew, this is hard."

Pale wiped the sweat off his forehead.

Riding and changing horses, Pale wanted to watch at least a part of the war against the Undead Legion.

The Priests came and gave them their blessings. Their exhausted stamina recovered, and as a result, they were able to continue riding.

When the going gets tough, smile.

“It’s just like what was shown in the video, this must be the right place.”

“This is east of Rosenheim Kingdom. Explorers have yet to venture to this land.”

“We’ll be the first ones to see the result.”

Romuna and Surka felt overwhelmed, as they had never set foot outside of Rosenheim Kingdom. In search of adventure, you’ll find yourself in the midst of various civilizations on the Versailles continent, and experience the depth of their culture.

When royal road first opened, many people were worried about others entering the game just to indulge in selfish desires. After the game became well known, people got to it completely addicted. Young gamers were at risk of becoming shut-ins, narrow-minded, and timid of the real world. Such a result would have become a huge issue. However Unicorn Corp. was able to placate people with such concerns.

A player’s experience varies with the continent they initially

chose. From cultures of different places, to events you'd never see in real life. Such as cultivating a land and running its government. So instead of become weak minded, people appeared more human. And strong ties of friendship could be built while battling with your companions.

Surka said.

“Hehe, let's ask Weed to cook for us.”

Hwaryeong smiled and nodded

“I'll have him make me a delicious dish.”

The Geomchis were also in the party.

“I want to drink.”

“I'll get you a cup, master.”

Geomchi2 quickly complied with enthusiasm.

The Geomchis 1 to 5 immediately followed the party! They had originally decided to scatter throughout the continent in order to hone their swordsmanship, but Pale and the others were going to see Weed, and they decided to tag along.

For the sake of food and drinks!

*

“Weed-nim!”

“We’re here!”

Weed was harvesting herbs on a cliff overlooking the bottom of the mountain, when people came rushing in.

The crowd rushed up the desolate mountain.

Pale, Surka, Irene, Romuna, Hwaryeong, Zephyr!

Unexpectedly, the Geomchis also arrived.

Weed welcomed them and a multitudes of conversations seemed to sweep over him, demanding his attention. Only now, that he was done fighting the Undead Legion, was he ready to talk.

In the middle of the plains, Mapan waited impatiently, as he felt no different from the parties that just arrived. He wanted to hear what had happened.

Mapan immediately came running to hear the story.

“And, so...”

Weed leisurely gathered herbs as he explained.

Just listening to the story about the war against the Undead Legion was exciting. Pale felt like he was on an adventure.

Mapan, having seen the battle first hand, was the envy of all.

“Was the quest successful?”

Pale cautiously asked.

Likewise, Mapan was unsure of the results of the quest since he had seen Weed and Lich Shire dying together.

If the Lich Shire had died even a second before Weed, the quest would have been a success, otherwise, it would have resulted in failure.

“Well...”

Weed’s expression conveyed endless depression.

Loneliness and solitude!

Deep sadness exuded throughout his body.

Even a lovestruck man dumped by his girlfriend wouldn't look so crestfallen.

"I thought it was okay to ask" Pale apologetically said.

Weed dug into the earth, pulling out herbs, and spoke.

"The items..."

"Yes?"

"I lost my chance obtain the all items dropped by the Lich Shire"

"Keoeog!"

Eventhough he had successfully completed an A-rank quest, Weed was a man who would grieve over the inferior Items he hadn't looted!

'Weed's the same as always'

Hwaryeong grinned.

Despite not having seen his friends for such a long time, he diligently harvested herbs in order to make even just one more penny, rather than catch up with them. But that was Weed's

mindset. Even if he acted differently now, he would never change his lifestyle.

Pale and Zephyr quickly jumped into the herbal field.

“Weed, we would like to help.”

However, Weed modestly shook his head.

“No. It is not your job to do this tedious job, it’s mine”

“But still...”

“Just sit there comfortably and watch me.”

The usual Weed would never hesitate to take advantage of other people!

Pale obediently sat down on a large rock after Weed declined his offer to help.

Nevertheless, Hwaryeong and Surka rolled up their sleeves to try and help Weed, but they were stopped.

“This is my job, and I’ll finish it”

Seeing is wanting!

Weed was more worried about the women than the men.

Theoretically, herbs were more coveted by women as it enhances vigor.

“Wow.”

“The wind feels great, Master”

“There’s an available spot on this side”

With the stamina enhancing herbs completely cleared out, the Geomchis took a seat on some rocks.

After a while, Weed's bag was filled with bottles of herbs

“Whew, I’m finished. Thanks for waiting for me to finish gathering herbs. I’ll start cooking some rabbit meat stew.”

“Wow!”

The news that Weed was going to cook led to cheers.

“Ahem!” Geomchi cleared his throat.

“My throat is parched.”

“As if a knife was shoved down my throat,” Geomchi² quickly added.

“Weed, we’ll catch a rabbit for the Stew. In the meantime, I hope you can make us something cold to drink with the herbs you harvested.”

“Yes. In fact, I’m going to brew a drink good enough to die for”

“Why don’t you?”

If it’ll makes you feel better, I’ll let you drink as much as you want!

“There are dishes to eat and wine to drink beyond the valley.”

“Won’t our travel be in vain? Wouldn’t it be faster if you start preparing now?”

“Enough said. Alcohol is better drunk cold. Depending on the atmosphere, the original aroma and taste varies greatly. So if you drank it in a relaxed atmosphere from high up in the valley, how much do you think the flavor will differ?”

“Yeah?” Geomchi thought to himself, ‘even just one cup would’ve be fine...’

Weed decided to head to the other side of the valley together with his companions. A far distance from the decimated battlefield was a clear, flowing stream, full of fish.

“This will slightly increase my cooking proficiency. Anyway, let me fill the pot up with water from the river”

“Ha, go on then.”

Within sight of his companions, Weed took out a pot and filled it with water from the creek. Then he added the rabbit meat to the pot, and brought it to a boil. Finally he took out a few herbs and seasonings, to create a rich stew.

The food revitalized their tired bodies!

“Great!”

“It’s really delicious.”

The dish Weed cooked was a success.

The rabbit meat stew disappeared as soon as it was ready. The entire group literally waged a war for for the remainder of the soup. The Geomchi’s appetite was merciless! Surprisingly the combined efforts of Pale’s party was overcome. In the end, their master won, and everyone else was fended off.

Weed gave them generous servings

Of course, none of this would be free.

‘One way or another. I will have you guys return the favor.’

In the case of livestock, pigs are raised as an investment and then slaughtered for profit!

“It burns my throat a little.”

He handed Geomchi a cup of alcohol to drink.

Gulp!

Some swallowed their saliva in anticipation.

Geomchi wasn't the only one who wanted a taste of Weed's brewed alcohol.

“Now, I'll let everyone have a taste of my drink”

Weed used Zahab's engraving knife and made mugs out of the surrounding trees and handed them to everybody.

Spliiish

Clear emerald liquor filled the cups. Any sane person wouldn't be able to withstand the sweet aroma that filled the air.

The Geomchis drank a sip and were ecstatic.

“Kyaah! this is nice.”

It's better to drink something cool when your body is warm. Your body will feel refreshed after a good drink.

“This liquor is priceless and it's worth every penny.”

Geomchi said, and Mapan agreed.

“This liquor is so good, I feel bad taking it without paying. It must have been hard making it. Here we are, spending Weed's hard earned quest money.”

“Everytime I drink a sip, I feel like I owe you an apology, we'll pay for the liquor. I'll buy two bottles”

After Pale tasted the drink, he decided to buy some too.

“Yeah, I live for this this kind of drink. I'll buy ten bottles.”

Since the Geomchis were no longer beginners, they were able to pay for their drinks. Weed will finally be able to make money from selling alcohol.

But modesty in his words must not be forgotten.

“Really, you don’t have to.”

“We’re out. Would you bring us four more bottles of your famous alcohol. Sorry to say this but we’ve run dry, can we have another round of drinks?”

“Yes, right away master.”

Weed enthusiastically brought out more liquor.

The Geomchis and the others happily drank the alcohol made from the cold valley water.

Irene and Romuna decided to get up and help and said.

“Weed-nim, we’ll help.”

“No. Please allow me to make it. Alcohol tastes different depending on the skill of the person who brewed it. This way the drink will deliver the most delicious taste.”

Weed had his own reasons for doing so and continued to bring out the alcohol.

Therefore, the Geomchis and the others drank Weed's delicious liquor like water. They deliberately conversed since the reason they travelled with Weed in the valley was to drink. They talked until the liquor was completely drained away.

Chapter 5: The Power To Reject Death

After the drinking party, Weed headed for the village of the Orcs. Weed shapeshifted into the Orc Karichwi again, who had a massive and vicious body.

“Kyaaaah, so cute!”

“This is how you look like as an Orc!”

“Look at those forearms. So muscular”

These people had an unusual taste.

Hwaryeong and Surka liked Karichwi’s appearance.

Yellowish teeth coming out of his mouth and a big nose.

Eyes brimming with confidence!

He had a bulging beer belly, proof overeating!

It looked nothing like a human or, for that account, like any other race you’d normally see. He was so ugly, that the word ‘monster’ was too genteel to describe him.

Weed had found the Orc village without much difficulty.

Orcs came to the Yuroki mountains, to hunt around the area, only a few months after the quest had ended.

“Chwichik! Selling zombie teeth for 5 million gold. Chwichik profit. Please buy.”

“Rotten Ancient Soldiers’ sword. Good condition! For only 20,000,000 gold.”

“Wear a cursed bracelet for the low amount of 8 million gold. Chwiik”

The Orcs were selling items they had acquired after the victory against the Undead Legion for absurdly high prices. But only a crazy person would buy it for those prices!

Some Orcs spoke in earnest with Weed.

“Good stuff. Buy some. Chwiik.”

“I’m not interested. Chwiik.”

Usually, that was enough to make them give up, but some Orcs were persistent.

“Do you want to buy this, Kari? You seem interested, see if it fits”

The Orcs were aggressively soliciting customers!

“Well, come take a look. Chwiik!”

Weed didn't even have to take a look. He knew how the Orcs tried to ensnare their customers.

The Orc Village also had another characteristic.

They were completely devoid of any intelligence.

“Kari. Kari.”

“What's the matter. Chwik.” Weed, showing no interest, replied.

“Hold on, those are humans. Chwit.”

“They are my prisoners. Chwit.”

Therefore, that reason was good enough to get them into the village. Because of the Orcs low intellect, they couldn't follow complex reasoning.

“Oh, who cares. Congratulations. Say chichichit. Mmm this one looks good, you going to eat it?”

The Orc soldiers were drooling over Hwaryeong, Irene and Romuna while looking at him.

In the eyes of the Orcs, Surka was so small she wasn't even considered food.

Sensing prey before them, the Orcs erupted into a hearty laugh.

As Weed was used to dealing with them, the situation wasn't of much concern to him.

"I'll eat later. Chwiik!"

"Oh Yea? Count me in. Chwiit."

"I'll pay 2 gold. Chichik."

"No money. Instead, how about 80 zombie eyeballs? Chwik."

Zombie eyeballs were high quality japtem worth 5 silvers each.

"Deal. Chwik"

"As usual, arms for me Chwichik"

“I’ll save them for you. Chwiik!”

However, Hwaryeong and Irene’s complexion went pale as they listened to Weed’s and the Orcs’ deeds during the war.

It seemed as if they were going to be hawked and eaten!

Weed brought his party to the Orc Elder’s home. The house was made out of roughly chopped wood, and when it rained, water leaked through the roof.

“Kari, you're home." The Orc Elder greeted Weed with eyes full of affection.

“Elder, as requested, I accomplished my quest, and returned. Chwiik.”

“Yes. Your contribution will not be forgotten. We, the Orcs have defeated the Dark Elves and have proven ourselves to be the rulers of Yuroki Mountains. Chwichichik!”

Ttiring!

Prosperity of the Orcs quest has been completed.

The Great Orcs were willing to make sacrifices.

To the highly fertile Orcs, life holds greater significance than death. It was a great honor for the Orcs to have fought against strong enemies. Fight to death against any enemy.

For a period of time, monsters in the rough terrains will no longer struggle for power because of the Orcs' victory over the war against the Dark Elves and the Undead Legion. The Orcs had been crowned as the rulers of the mountains.

- Fame has increased by 230.
- Familiarity with the Orcs has increased by 19.
- Your influence in the village has risen by 950. You can now access the domestic affairs window.
- Influence in the Orc Village: 2,790
- You have leveled up.
- You have leveled up.
- You have leveled up.

He gained 3 levels by completing the quest given by the Orc Race.

The Orc Elder continued saying.

“Here are the promised goods. Chwit!”

Quest reward items! For completing the quest from the Orc Village, the reward was either Gem or an Ore.

‘I hope I would get an expensive gem’

Processed gems from sculpting sells for more money. Weed held considerable expectations.

However, what the Orc Elder brought back was a black lump

“Chwichwik. This ore was discovered a long time ago. We found this being used in parts of some armor we took during a hunt. You can take it to a Blacksmith and have it applied to your armor to enhance it. Chwiit. Take care of it.”

A black lump!

At first, Weed did not know what the item was.

It was neither a type of equipment nor a mineral ore.

After examining for some time, faint traces of an armor was found.

It could be used to make gloves, boots, shoulder pauldrons, and belts. Things that were partially made out of mithril could be sold for a hefty sum.

The mithril could be melted in a furnace, but without proper skill proficiency, the process of hardening the metal would result in an unusable piece of junk metal.

‘Mithril. To handle this properly, I definitely have to go to the City of Artists. I also have to pay the city a visit to obtain more knowledge of the Moonlight Sculptor profession.’

The City of Artists, Rhodium!

Many Guilds of the artisan and production classes gathered there.

“I sincerely thank you, Elder. Chwit.”

Weed placed his reward inside his backpack.

Without missing a beat, the elder continued talking.

“Now the Orcs can hold their heads up with pride. Chwitchwit. We have proved to the arrogant Dark Elves that we are the masters of Yuroki Mountains. Chwiiit. Up to the last moments, through tough challenges, the Orcs survived.”

*Ttiring!

The existence of Orcs in the continent of Versailles was revealed.

Ferocious, selfish, and enormous race!

However, they are also honest and straightforward. The Orc race boasts a large population and the strongest members in terms of raw power. An overwhelming force!

With their enhanced physical abilities, the results of the Orcs' growth is physical strength that rivals that of a Barbarian.

For the Prosperity of the Specie.

The Orc race is now available at the start of Royal Road. New players can now choose the Orc race as their initial character.

‘It’ll be a busy time in the Yuroki Mountains’

After some time, Orcs with the appearance as handsome as Weed were made.

Curious of the new race, a lot of people were interested and chose Orcs as their initial character. Multitudes of new players arose in the Village of the Orcs. There were a lot of Orc players with “Chwiik” in their name!

Thanks to expensive prices and unconventional commerce in the village, the Orc players ran around the mountains hunting while looking heinous and selfish, but it also produced many opportunities.

Spacious hunting ground of Yuroki Mountains!

Infested with high-ranked monsters!

When they chose to start as an Orc in the Village of Exiles, they were able to get many value experiences. They wouldn't have been able to if they chosen the human race.

Weed bowed his head slightly towards the Orc Elder and walked out of the village.

*

With his party, Weed went to the castle of the Dark Elves to look for the Necromancer and submit his report.

“Commander!”

In the castle were Dark Elves and the Soldiers of Rosenheim Kingdom.

Royal Knights and Centurions alive and well.

Buran, Becker and Hosram!

Weed noticed that Dale was missing.

"Buran, where's Dale?"

"Da, Dale... Heuheuk!"

The Royal Knights had somber faces, both Buran and Hosram bursted into tears, while Becker was trying hard to hold back his tears.

"Dale, along with the Wyverns, got swept away by the Lich's magic spell."

"How'd it happen!"

Weed eyes turned red and began to cry.

Deep sorrow, sadness, regret, bitterness and pain!

These were the feelings that Weed felt.

With a glum look, Weed sat to the spot next to Hosram, where Dale would usually sit.

Dale was hardworking and reliable, he got promoted to the rank

of Centurion, and was given charge of the main force. ‘Dale.’

Rosenheim Kingdom soldiers were sorrowful, but Weed took the chance to increase intimacy.

“Nevertheless Commander, as a parting gift, he and the wyverns sent one of Barr Khan’s main forces straight to hell.”

“I’m sure he regretted nothing, we all would have followed you anywhere.”

Hosram, Buran, and Becker’s affinity and loyalty was at its best. To other soldiers of the Rosenheim Kingdom and the Royal Knights, Weed’s order was absolute.

It wasn’t unusual for a commander to mourn for the loss of a subordinate. Weed’s ability, charisma, and leadership that allowed him to complete the quest earned deep trust amongst the soldiers.

Weed’s companions thought that they had mistakenly judged him.

Pale reflected.

‘Although he cares a lot about money... he also has a tender heart.’

Surka and Irene had the same thoughts as Pale.

‘What an affectionate response Weed, having to mourn for fallen soldiers.’

‘The fallen Kingdom soldiers, even the careless ones, are being cherished.’

With tears silently forming on the rim of his eyes, Hwaryeong and Romuna tried not to smile. Weed had lost a lot of subordinates, but they believed his pain would come to pass.

In regards to depression and loss, these were some of the feelings that the world did not allow Weed to have. But reality was a little different. Weed was sad about something else.

‘My contribution!’

If the soldiers of Rosenheim Kingdom were sent back alive, the contribution he spent to borrow them will be returned. If their levels were higher than he first borrowed them, he will receive extra contribution points. Contribution was related to rewards and money.

He felt great regret because the death of Dale, the Centurion, had lost him a lot of contribution points.

Weed’s eyes were still sore as he faced the Rosenheim Kingdom’s soldiers.

“In addition to Dale, who else died?”

Amongst the soldiers, 25 people have lost their lives as they fought with the wicked Lich. However, our fallen comrades will be honored.

“Not anymore. Although they are no longer here, they will remain in our hearts forever. We should never forget them.”

“You are right. Commander”

Its a miracle that all the soldiers didn't die fighting in the quest against the Undead Legion. The healing power of the priests contributed greatly to the success of the mission, a lot more than he would have thought.

Buran, Becker, Hosram, and others who were ranked as Centurion leveled up a lot. Thanks to his quest, the soldiers' level had grown by an average of about 70 levels. They would probably be promoted when he returned them to Rosenheim Kingdom.

The once ordinary soldiers would climb at an unprecedented rate. The Royal Knights had also leveled up by about 10 to 20 levels or even more.

After checking on the Rosenheim soldiers and the Royal Knights, Weed went to the Black Temple to meet with the Necromancers. Weed's companions followed up to that point and stopped.

The black-skinned Dark Elves were walking around the citadel and had sparked Weed's party's interest.

“Weed, we would like to walk around the castle and take a look”

Weed considered Romuna's request, and then nodded in agreement. He didn't have anything else to do other than to report the success of his quest.

“Yes, please do so. I'll report the quest and then I'll come meet you.”

Alone, Weed went into the Black Temple.

*

Underground of the Black Temple!

Necromancers were still wearing their robes with neutral faces, waiting for Weed to arrive.

While waving a Bone Wand, they said.

“We have waited for thee. Thy ability as commander was truly remarkable and will eternally be exalted.”

“It was no big deal. I had found their weakness” Weed replied

politely.

Actually, I did not consider myself to be doing so well with the quest. If fought alone, the Legions of Undead would be similar to beating an egg on a rock. However, maximizing the Orcs' and Dark Elves' abilities was a great investment. It was not a big deal, thanks to them it wasn't hard to claim victory.

“Thanks to thy ferocious spirit, we were able to defeat the Legions of Undead and put Shire to his eternal rest. To hell with ambition where it'll burn with fire. Thanks to thee, the continent will no longer see works of Shire and the Undead Legion.”

Ttiring!

Lich Shire's Undead Legion quest has been completed.

The Lich Shire tried to conquer the world with darkness, but has been stopped and shall never again return.

The continent of Versailles seems to be safe for now, because Shire who devastated the world in darkness and tried to cause an endless war, has been defeated.

- Your fame has increased by 2,750.

- Familiarity with the Necromancers have increased.

- You have leveled up.

- You have leveled up.
- You have leveled up.
- You have leveled up.
- You have leveled up...

Messages of his level increasing continued appearing. He had simultaneously gained a whopping 17 levels. To some extent, the quest limits the experience gained depending on the allegiance of the recipient.

Completing a A rank difficulty quest meant receiving a lot of experience. Weed noticed that his level went over 300, to level 306.

‘I’ve regained all the levels I’ve lost.’

He has lost a significant amount of levels from creating Wyverns, yet he had gained all it back.

The Necromancer raised his thin hands and said.

“On behalf of all Necromancers, I will bestow upon you the compensation.”

Weed would never dream of refusing them. With an A rank

quest, the rewards you received were bound to be enormous. Receiving the Lich Shire's book of Necromancy would be just the icing of the cake.

‘At least a unique item! Or 3-4 rare items should be fine too.’

Looking back at the quest he had completed for the Church of Freya, receiving something similar to Agatha's Sword was to be expected.

“But I'm sorry, we have absolutely no proprietorship of treasures.”

"..."

“Acquitted as hermits who could not attend to the world, we have no treasures to award you with”

“Isn't there at least a treasure that you've saved that could be awarded to me?”

“For hundreds of years we have lived in the shadows of obscurity. Treasures of the Necromancers are scattered throughout the world, secluded from the sun.”

"..."

In the end, it all made sense. Looking miserable, Weed felt like

curling into a ball.

Weed's robes were so tattered that he was close to being naked, and his boots were so ragged his toes were sticking out.

The Necromancers looked no different from beggars. It was enough to make Weed fall into despair. However, the Necromancer shook his head.

“Do not be discouraged, there is something that we would like to give to you.”

“What is it?”

“As the leader of the Necromancers, I would like to present you with a special gift for all your assistance. This power is exclusive for to the Necromancer class!”

The atmosphere was very solemn.

Ttiring!

The skill ‘The Power to Reject Death’ is a high ranked skill unique to Necromancers, and passed down specifically to Blood Necromancers.

When attained:

Health will increase by 500.

Mana will increased by 1000.

All stats will increase by 3 (+3 All Stats)

Would you like to accept?

The message window appeared before his eyes.

Weed did not worry so much.

‘For a prestigious A rank difficulty quest, the reward wasn’t so bad.’

The increase in health, mana and stats made the skill a great supplementation for Weed.

Unique to a former high rank wizard profession, the necromancer!

It wasn’t such a bad thing as long as he received the skill of the second class advancement of the Necromancer class, the Blood Necromancers.

“I will accept it.”

“You chose well.”

-You have accepted the skill ‘The Power to Reject Death’.

When attained:

Health will increase by 500.

Mana will increased by 1000.

All stats will increase by 3 (+3 All Stats)

pajijjik!

Weed's hand transformed to the shape of a Death Knight's.

“Skill description. The power to reject death.”

Power to Reject Death Beginner Level 1 (0%) Blood Necromancer's Unique Skill.

It is automatically triggered and activates when your health reaches zero. At the crossroads of life and death, avoid being put to rest by thy foes, and seek revenge.

You are immediately revived as an undead, ready to rage across the battlefield.

While in the undead state you gain two times the amount of life and mana. After a day, you will return to being human.

When your Vitality as an undead is completely exhausted, your skill levels decline and you will be unable to log in for 24 hours.

The type of Undead will vary depending on the mastery of 'Power to Reject Death'.

You can take advantage of the Undead's abilities.

In the undead state, you are completely immune to black magic curses.

For 1 day, you will be able to hunt as an Undead.

In your undead state, you are vulnerable to Holy Magic.

Blessings and Healing from Priests are impossible.

Undead also experience the death penalty normally, and lose skill and experience levels like a normal player would.

'In battle, the person whose life drops to 0, dies. However, using the power to deny death, I'll be able to continue fighting' Weed thought that his new skill was pretty useful.

A skill that allows you to die and return as an undead while retaining your level before death. Not to mention that turning into an undead will help him prevent item loss on death.

Stamina and vitality were both doubled, and depending on which undead he transformed into, he would gain different skills.

Above all else, death can turn into a strategic advantage now with which he could continue playing.

‘I no longer have to wait for 24 hours to play the game.’

Dark Gamers such as Weed made their money through quests.

Dying meant a substantial loss of experience and items and it deprived Weed from the opportunity to make money for 24 hours. The delay on the one day suspension means less monetary loss.

Although that came with formidable advantages, there still existed side effects. Even if he always revived as an Undead, he could not necessarily be sure of having victory in his grasp. On the contrary, he would suffer great consequences from dying twice.

All this is said.

“We necromancers have suffered greatly because of misunderstandings, forthwith it can be resolved. We the disciples of Black Magic, will once again prosper in this land.”

“May you be successful.”

“It may be a stretch, but we have suffered a great plenty while not trying. But there is one thing I would like to know. Is the continent of Versailles really peaceful?”

“Yes?”

“Unknown to most, evil hidden beneath the world has begun to move, this evil is known as the Embinyu Church. There are 12 leaders of this religion.”

“Religious leaders?”

“The churches of Freya and Rui are different from the dark group hiding in Valhalla’s temple. They believe in the evil god and will try to dye the world with darkness. Amongst them is the 12th leader who is hiding in the land of Baseurin. Although peaceful in daytime, during night, demonic festivals unfold. As a result, the entire city is under their control”

- You have learned information about the Embinyu Church.

- Learned information about Baseurin

‘Baseurin.’

It seemed to be an undiscovered region, and information was always helpful.

Weed said his farewells and exits out of the Black Temple.

*

The people of the central continent looked up at the sky with resentment.

Cloudless sunny weather!

The Sun was blazing hot.

“It’s hot, it’s hot.”

“Damn. Where have the rain gone to.”

For the past few days, there had not been a drop of rain. A haze had settled over the land as the heat continued to skyrocket. As the atmospheric temperature continued to rise, flame type magic became dramatically stronger. A 20% increase or more, was granted due to effect of the weather. Seeing as magical power varied depending on the surrounding environment of the caster. As a result, Wizards didn’t have you use the full extent of their

power to cast a powerful spell.

“Level 272 Wizard specializing in fire magic. Can I join your party?”

“You don’t have to cast a strong magic flame. What are you trying to barbecue?”

Wizards who specialized in Fire Magic received their share of inhospitality. However, Wizards who specializes in Ice Magic, even those who were just becoming proficient with their magic, were in the spotlight. Even if their magic was a little weak, they were taken to many exhilarating places.

Scorching Heat!

Sweat running down his spine!

Even during short battles, stamina descended quickly. Surprisingly, there were only a few people who left the continent of Versailles in frustration. Instead of complaining, more people seemed to arrive in the continent of Versailles. It seems like the world had a twisted sense of fun. Dynamically changing the land.

The pleasure of overcoming difficulties to weave a new path.

The fact the original temperature of the Versailles continent has not returned was not surprising.

“Apparently this is the curse of King Belsos, if so, there’s a way to solve it”

“Let’s go find a way before anyone else finds it!”

“Maybe, if you overcome the heat, you’ll earn an enormous amount of fame.”

The members of the Crimson Wing Guild were shunned by the people who had witnessed their downfall, while other guilds fought for the place that had been opened by their demise.

On the other hand, people were gradually adapting to the heat. Inside the Kingdoms and Cities, some people lingered near a fountain. Before people left to hunt or to explore, they would buy a bucket of water. Drinking cold water while walking, the heat was forgotten for a short time.

Those who were intimidated by the prospect of hunting under the sun, plunged themselves into underground dungeons. The cool underground dungeons and dens became very popular hunting grounds.

Many users sought cooler temperatures and traveled north. But it was difficult withstanding the cold ground, recently almost everywhere seemed lost to the cold.

The Curse of King Bellsos affected many players on the

continent.

*

“Looking for party without success...”

Rosetta who chose a profession with Fire affiliation and looked around while sitting by the fountain.

People were searching for parties so they could start hunting.

“My fire attacks is effective as any magic attack. Fast and powerful, although not as much range as spells.”

There weren't many wizards who chooses to hunt alone because it was difficult to overcome their disadvantage of having low health and defense, but majority parties were prepared to defend them.

“If there's an opportunity, would it hurt to learn an Ice attack? Since I am fully qualified to advanced to a Necromancer, I am forced to wait for it. The problem with learning a new skill is that the system can only raise it a little bit, but by joining a party, it can be raised significantly...”

It was then, when one of the nearby NPC villagers opened their mouth and spoke.

“Rosetta. Did you hear the rumors?”

“Yes?” Rosetta was slightly acquainted with the locals.

“The story of an amazing adventurer named Weed. The Lich Shire full of hatred led a Legion of Undead but was stopped by a single man named Weed.”

“Umm, which Weed are you talking about?”

“Yes, he has sent the Lich Shire and his Legions of Undead to their everlasting rest, and will never again be able to conspire evil. Although many soldiers and paladins had lost their lives, we can finally rest our eyes, eh?”

So far no one knew of the quest progress other than Pale’s party!

Everyone had come to hear of the news of the defeat of the Undead Legions.

“Weed! Weed completed the quest.”

“The Lich Shire is dead!”

“Necromancer, I can now advance to the Necromancer job!”

Rosetta too, took part in the uproar that swept the entire

subcontinent by shouting here and there like an erupted fountain, everywhere, a similar scene was taking place.

*

The Versailles Continent story.

Shin Hye-Min was in the middle of today's broadcast.

“Yes. Sources say that monsters who had invaded the Reuwan village were eradicated. People have once again begun to resettle in the village.”

Oh Juwan continues where she left off.

“We are indeed fortunate. This is result of many mercenaries who worked hard to defeat the monsters, is it not? Crisis is opportunity! Thousands of mercenaries who fought the battle gained a lot of experience. Although the village was ravaged, congratulations to all for winning.”

Shin Hye-Min and Oh Juwan had bags under their eyes.

All kinds of random events seemed to pop up around the Versailles continent. Not resting, ever vigilant, the broadcast was extended.

‘I could not travel with Pale-nim yet again.’ Shin Hye-Min felt

pain in her chest.

Because of the broadcast, Shin Hye-Min hasn't logged into Royal Road for several days to meet with her lover, Pale, yet alone talked to him!

‘Ah, Pale-nim and the others should have departed for their trip to Plains of Despair.’

She too, wanted to go along but had been no time. Fortunately after completing today's broadcast, she would receive a three day holiday. ‘You can finish this broadcast.’ She thought sorrowfully.

Putting up a smile while casting her feelings aside, Shin Hye-Min continued the broadcast.

“Now let's talk about the heat wave that's been occurring these days, do you think that the Crimson Wing Guild are responsible for this and caused them to disband?”

“Yes, in fact, I don't think anyone could have anticipated just how large the ripple effect that this event created.”

“At the center of this is Crimson Wing Guild, which boasts a formidable power.”

“It wasn't by chance that they have achieved their place as one of the top ten guilds of Versailles continent. They were a huge guild, owning 7 castles in 25 different villages. The guild has 150,000

available for immediate deployment in case of any form of emergency. The collapse and dissolution of a strong guild was very unexpected.”

“It is as you’ve said but it can’t be helped”

“As Hye-Min-ssi said. All their allied guild turned their backs on them, and avoid socializing with them. Other guilds who had been attacked by them, did not miss their opportunity for revenge... Their gate was reinforced only by ten thousand Archers! The way Terose commanded his army was electrifying, but it didn’t stop the morale from falling. On the other hand, allied forces was became more powerful adversaries. Which forced the Crimson Wing guild to choose their last resort and disbanded”

“Truly Heartbreaking.”

“However, the guild master Terose, with Dane, Do-Gwang, who all played a pivotal role in the guild, was seen together with other players, and seemed to be recovering. Perhaps their credibility will not disappear completely.”

“Indeed! Many guilds are looking for a way to stop the intense heat, isn’t that right Oh Juwan-ssi?”

“There is an increase of interest in recruiting new players to find a way repel the heat. In hope of doing so, will trigger a quest or find some treasures. To try and find a trail, they will start from the north and make their way to the deserts in the south where King Belsos ruins are.”

“A great adventure to the Northern continent.”

“Myths and legends always revolve around a boss type monster. I can’t even imagine how strong the monsters flocking towards villages are or how frequently they invade. There are only a few high level players who are at the forefront of this, pioneering new hunting methods. It’s actually quite amazing considering the monster’s levels.”

“I’m surprised that you know so much, have you been pioneering north?”

“I haven’t been there myself, but more likely than not, people will gain interest in exploring the North.”

There were not many people in the north due to the cold. However, there were adventures who were not deterred and traveled on foot.

Shin Hye-Min’s eyes shone.

‘I think it would interesting if I get a chance to travel to North with Pale-nim.’ Shin Hye-Min said quietly.

“The northern part of the continent is currently warm. Don’t you think it’s a good time to travel?”

Then Oh Juwan face emerged with an outrageous expression.

“That is still not enough Shin Hye-Min-ssi. I cannot begin to imagine how cold the north of the continent is. I assume that even with the heat wave, majority of the area is still covered in snow. Because of the frozen grounds and snow over at the northern Kingdom, adventurers have a hard time looking for signs. However, those adventurers that managed to arrive at their destination, left tangible evidence, but had a hard time leaving again.”

“They had done a good job”

Thereafter, Shin Hye-Min concluded the first section of the news, she proceeded to the 2nd section of what’s happening in the continent of Versailles.

The second part was progression of professions from various sectors. On important issues, the professionals were called in for interviews before the show.

With this, he said with confidence.

“The Legions of Undead clearly seems to have failed. Until now, we have not receive any news of success.”

“I have already suspected it. I am not surprised.”

Each experts were allowed to voice their own opinion. They

received a lot of criticism from viewers because they emphasized on the failure.

Shin Hye-Min said cautiously.

“The likelihood of success is remains, don’t you think so?”

“It’s impossible. Someone of Shin Hye-min-ssi's low level wouldn't be able to understand, the quests difficulty level is extraordinary.”

“It becomes more obvious as ones level grows higher. We also once were like Shin Hye-Min-ssi when we first started playing”

“Rosenheim Kingdom’s Red Mercenary Guild has been dispatched. Please rest assured. The Undead Legion will be stopped if they try to invade.”

Shin Hye-min was embarrassed being unable to rebuke the veteran players’ claims.

They didn’t know the identity of Weed, as the company refused to disclose any information, but she was also reluctant to bring up her personal relationship with him. Shin Hye-Min’s face showed the slight frown.

Everyone was clearly betting that he would fail, despite all the incredible things he had already accomplished, they still scorned him. These things were gradually beginning to pile up under the

surface, bringing her temper to a boil until a sound in her headphones indicated that a message was being conveyed.

News!

Shin Hye-Min addressed the broadcast with a genuine laugh.

“We have just received new information concerning the topic that everyone wants to know. The results of the Legions of Undead quest.”

"...?"

“Is it as we have said, a failure?”

The experts were clearly puzzled when Shin Hye-mine said.

“The Lich Shire has been killed, and the Undead Legions had been put to rest.”

“That’s not possible!”

The experts stood their ground.

It was completely against common sense that something like this could happen.

“I can’t believe it! Are you sure about your sources?”

“It is the common story throughout the all residence of the continent of Versailles and amongst Rosenheim Kingdom’s Red Mercenary Guild.”

“Yes?”

“We’re gonna have to come back to you another time.”

" ... "

Chapter 6: Into The World

Weed had been busy preparing for the previous battle; and now, affairs had returned to normal for the Orcs and humans. After Weed had reported to the black temple, he wandered around the marketplace.

“So, here’s the market.”

Mapan acted as his guide.

After living in the citadel for a several days, the Dark Elves had a rough grasp of the geography, and many Dark Elves were opening up shops in the area.

“We Elves sell fruit that we planted and grew ourselves.”

“Buy medical herbs to heal your wounds.”

They had black skin and black eyes that shone like pearls!

Though the Dark Elves weren’t very tall, they had flexible bodies, overflowing with health and beauty.

“I am surprised. Mapan-nim is wandering around various market stalls to meet the Elves”

Surka said to Mapan, but Mapan awkwardly scratched his head.

“Actually I haven't met that many.”

“Then...?”

“The first time I saw Dark Elves, Wood Elves, and Half Elves, was when I was traveling to the center of the continent with Hwaryeong.”

“How are Wood Elves different?”

Surka asked the question that was on everyone's mind.

Pale, Irene, and Romuna, had never stepped outside of Rosenheim Kingdom, the Geomchi were the type to listen as they were very ignorant.

“Half Elves have long pointed ears, other than that, they are no different to humans. Half human, Half Elf, they're a mixed species. Wood Elves live deep in the woods and have excellent attack power, but are weak to magic.”

“There are other Elves too?”

“Grey Elves or High Elves, Shadow Elves, Night Elves... There are many varieties of Elves.”

The description that Mapan had given to Surka was the full extent of his knowledge.

Geomchi turned and poked Geomchi3 and asked

“Geomchi3”

“Yes, master.”

“Do you know a lot about Royal Road?”

“Yes, of course master!”

Geomchi3 replied gallantly. He pretended to be the Royal Road specialist amongst the Geomchis.

“Where do the Elves come from?”

“Yes, the Elves, sir?”

“Yeah.”

“The Elves...”

“You do not know the answer?”

Geomchi and Geomchi₂ had eyes filled with disbelief, and Geomchi₃ stirred his hand.

“Of course I know. From the Elf village.”

“Village?”

“Wood village, Dark village, and Half village. It’s simple once you understand it, right? Their skin is black because this is the Dark village.”

There was a grain of truth in that strange explanation, Geomchi nodded his head.

"Oh ho, so it’s like that. You are wise, as expected, Geomchi₃."

“You’re too kind, master!”

*

The party went to the market to buy medicinal herbs and simple souvenirs. There were plenty of cheap, good quality medicinal herbs.

The party indulged themselves in the fun of sightseeing.

Mysterious items were common in grocery stores and trading

posts, and with the Dark Elves walking around proud of their black skin, it was an extremely mysterious existence.

The scenery of the surrounding landscape from the citadel located at the mountain top was delightful.

Standing above the castle walls, the world unfolded underneath their feet. Azure skies, thick clouds accompanied by a calm breeze made the mountainview exceptional. Refreshing strong wind blew and cliffs were visible from the distance.

Irene was the first person who spoke out, with a smile on her lips.

“All of this walking around is worthwhile.”

“I know. I need to get out more often.”

Zephyr shared the same sentiment.

He usually fished along the river, so it was his first time to come to the mountains. He felt refreshed coming to the top of a high mountain and enjoying the sights.

“Well, let me take you to the weapon shop then.”

Mapan and his companions decided to look at weapons. They entered the weapon shop.

“Hello.”

Mapan bent down to greet the Dark Elf, who merely tilted his head.

“Why are you here?”

A haughty Elder Dark Elf!

The Elder Dark Elf who ran the shop had an arrogant look. Customers were not his concern.

Mapan asked politely.

“Do you mind if I look around the shop?”

“Knock yourself out.”

The party went around and looked at weapons individually.

The Orc Village had decent shops, but here there were plenty of rare things.

Zephyr found a fishing rod. Elves took pride in the flexibility, elasticity and rigidity of their cultivated trees, so it was perfect for fishing.

“How much do you want for it?”

“8000 Gold. If you’re thinking about saving and not buying then put it down.”

The value was inexpensive.

Zephyr paid for the item without a word.

"Wow! So much money."

Irene said, and Zephyr burst out laughing.

"It's only money..."

"..."

Instantly, Zephyr became public enemy of the party!

The party was about to walk out the door to search for another shop which sold other types of weapon, however, the Dark Elf called out to Pale and stopped him in his tracks.

“Are you an archer?”

“Yes, esteemed elder. Do you have something you wish to tell me?”

“Compared to your talents, your bow is lacking. We Elves will never draw a bow that will put us to shame.”

Pale’s face reddened with embarrassment. It was a fact that his bow was considerably worn out, and it was time to replace it.

“Buy one here, there are lots of bows so you can buy for a cheap price.”

Most of the weapons in the shop were daggers and bows. Daggers were in showcases, while bows were hung on walls. However, in the citadel of the Dark Elves mostly sold weapons primarily made by the Elves.

The first bow he saw was barely level 200, but the rest were more powerful. The prices of the items were not suited for the weapon, as some looked like they were just there as displays.

Not to be overconfident, Pale chose a regular bow. An antique bow decorated with sky blue hue. Although the Elven bow was not rare or unique, nor did it provide longer distance, it easy to use.

“How much is this one?”

“25,000 gold.”

“I only have 24,000 gold on me.....”

“If you’re not going to buy it, get out”

Methods on how to save money that he learnt from Weed didn’t work. Hard to please Dark Elves, when dealing with humans, they had a very unfavorable impression!

‘All my earnings amounts to 25,000 gold’

After a difficult struggle, Pale eventually bought the bow. Archers did not differ from Swordsmen in that they wanted better weapons right away. In some way, there’s a fiercer competition for Archer weapons. If you shoot a good bow, the range is further lengthened, showing an evident difference.

“Hu-hu-hu”

Pale let out a hysterical laugh after purchasing his new bow.

Then Surka looked at the owner and said.

“But you look cute indeed. Not like an old man but like an oppa.”

“Surka!”

Romune cried out in astonishment. Hard to please Dark Elves, you had to take extra caution not to anger them.

Being in a neutral zone made no difference. Unlike humans, depending on the intimacy levels, one could be attacked at any time.

But such concerns seemed groundless as the Elder Dark Elf shyly smiled.

“Girl, you really think so? That I truly look young?”

“Yes. You do not look older but truly super cute. Dark Elf-nim.”

“What a very cute girl. My name is Granbell. I hope you will call me Granbell.”

“My name is Surka. Granbell-nim.”

Zephyr and Hwaryeong's mouths dropped at what was taking place. First having him give his name, afterwards it was possible to form an acquaintance relationship to some extent. Dark Elves like to look cute and young!

Surka's words by chance formed proper intimacy.

Romuna's fists trembled.

Pretending that the elderly Dark Elf was cute like an idiot. Depending on the perspective it should be different, but enough to say super cute. The same Surka that knocked out monsters with her bare hands was pretending to be cute.

“Surka you....”

“Shush!”

Rumuna tried calling out to Surka, but Mapan quickly stopped her.

“This is an important moment. So leave her alone.”

“What?”

“It seems this is a way to create intimacy with Dark Elves.”

Mapan knew better than anybody about the importance of intimacy and commerce in kingdoms.

As the intimacy with villagers rises, more serious dialogue with them becomes possible. One could possibly be asked to perform quests or earn important information.

In fact, when Mapan heard of Weed conducting the Orcs and Dark Elves of the Yuroki Mountains, he had big expectations. Via Weed in the Plains of Despair, he hoped to get quest information,

but unexpectedly with little luck.

The Orcs were simple and ignorant so they did not know much about anything. The only information they had was about hunting grounds. Where and how to encounter strong monsters.

It was the Orc's way to send out several warriors for every one that falls. 100 could be brought to fight but only one might survive. This was no help to merchant Mapan.

In addition to that, Orcs were not very fond of humans. They found even basic conversations difficult. The gold needed to bribe them or feed them was enough to make Mapan have a nervous breakdown.

In this situation the Dark Elves were no different. They were arrogant and reluctant to have any conversations with humans. Shopping or hearing basic stories was possible but the profit was minimal.

Weed hated Dark Elves considerably. They were picky, lazy and had to be constantly pampered like they were some kind of nobility.

Mapan was isolated in the Citadel of the Dark Elves. No words could describe how delighted he was when the party arrived.

A guide plays an important role, giving detailed information about the Plains of Despair.

They were not disappointed by Granbell when he said.

“If you head to the east of our province, you will encounter tall mountains. The terrain is uneven, and you will be able to hunt lots of monsters but it’s the scenery that’s the best. It’s a little tough to climb Horom Mountain on foot, but the story is you’ll be in for a surprise at the hunting grounds although I can’t give you any information.”

Weed came back from the Black Temple and saw the party’s excited faces.

“What is it?”

“Well...”

Mapan went ahead and spoke of what happened in the weapon shop.

“A high mountain. Maybe you can get fame for climbing it?”

In fact, until now Weed was fighting the Undead Legions so he did not know about the Dark Elves’ story. Money might be around too, so feeling it was a necessity declared.

“Let’s fly up Horom Mountain!”

Pale strongly disagreed.

Irene and Romuna also did not wander around because of their low fame.

For them, this was a great opportunity to earn fame.

Weed looked at the other party members.

“Everyone in favor of climbing Horom Mountain?”

“Mountain. I’ve stayed in the rivers for a long time, spending some time in the mountains seems fine to me Hyung-nim.”

Zephyr quietly spoke with impudence and Hwaryeong smiled with interest.

“For the sake of having a scenic walk of the breeze blowing the lush, let’s climb the mountain!”

Geomchi said and clasped his hand together.

“Sounds like it’ll be fun.”

Geomchi² said.

“Eating grilled meat in the mountains has a special taste, seems

like it will be refreshing, fine by me, I'm coming.

Geomchi³, Geomchi⁴ and Geomchi⁵ had similar opinions. They had not many adventures this year, so climbing Horom Mountain seemed like it would be quite interesting to see. If you climb a really high mountain, you will be able to look around at the surrounding landscape. The entire party left the Citadel of Dark Elves and were intoxicated being in the mountains. Climbing the mountain, they had completely fallen for the story of the weapon store owner.

‘Somehow, I’m getting nervous’

Weed’s companions felt that this was somehow too easy.

‘Well, I’m sure everything will be alright.’

Everyone was content that nothing was there to oppose them, which wasn’t strange because there was no reason to do so. With a high fame, a player’s status in kingdoms and villages are easily recognized and quests can be easily obtained.

Because of Weed’s high fame, he didn’t have any trouble commanding the Dark Elves and the Orcs.

Weed nodded.

“We climbed the mountain from the bottom. Everybody should be tired, so how about we take a break and regroup?”

Pale and the rest were tired as they already rode a horse en route through the Plains of Despair. So far, they had yet to sleep properly. Drowsiness was forcing them to their knees. Hwaryeong agreed in a hurry.

“That would be lovely. Let’s meet again after we’ve all slept.”

“In that case, so be it.”

Pale sighed and then he told his party to meet up in 12 hours after getting some sleep.

Weed impatiently terminated the connection after the Geomchis logged out.

*

Lee Hyun got out of the capsule to organize the household finances. There was a need to meticulously organize the income and expenditures if it meant saving even a penny.

“This month’s profits...”

Lee Hyun’s hands were trembling while writing the household ledger.

Maybe other people would buy the items he had acquired this

time.

Lich Shire was difficult to beat, his level was at least 470. No one had ever defeated a boss-class monster of this caliber, yet only 3 items were obtained. Nevertheless, Necromancer's Tome was unique compared to the other 2 items he obtained.

One enchantment stone and a seemingly useless staff.

“I'll put aside the enchantment stone rather than dispose of it, eventually I'll sell if I need something to eat or drink which leaves only the staff.”

He decided not to sell the enchantment stone unless it was at a sufficient price. Perhaps if he uploaded it to the auction site, people would stand in line to buy it. Other blacksmiths can be entrusted to buy the enchantment stone because they wanted to process it!

They were more than willing to directly reinforce items as there will be further benefits when selling. Raising skill mastery made them able to get a higher price. Even so, the income was far less than expected.

“Should I sell the staff first?”

Lee Hyun went to the auction site and wrote articles for his items. Still, the staff did not seem to be a lot of money. Priests wouldn't buy goods labeled with useless options like Sacrifice and Devotion. If it became a known fact that the staff had such

features, it would be used only when necessary.

“I wonder what my earlier items are priced at?”

Without any big expectations, Lee Hyun looked at the prices put up for the goods. He had given up altogether early on because of vicious buyers that raised the price by only 1 won.

In fact, it was not a law to hold the auction till the due date. By setting a determined target price in advance, when the price is exceeded, purchase is made. Generally if a reasonable price is set, stuff is often sold in 1 hour. However, in order to make even a penny more, Lee Hyun did not set a target price. Playing around by raising the price by 1 won was very common.

“By now though, it’s got to be over 5,000 won right?”

Lee Hyun thought realistically for the most part before looking at the price of the items. Glaives and Elf Headbands were a little more than 1 won. In the first place, there were few buyers for glaives so he wasn’t going to hope for an expensive price. If the Elf Headbands sold well enough, he predicted he would be able to get at least 300,000 won. But then something toxic entered his eyes, it was one japtem.

Minotaur's claw: Number of bids 6. Price 30,000,000 won

“What the hell.”

No outrageous words came from Lee Hyun's mouth. Joke bids could not be made in auctions. That is because when you bid on goods, at least 10% of the total amount must be registered as deposit.

“But 30 million won?”

Lee Hyun thought it was ridiculous but he quickly confirmed the bid in an instant. He decided to sell the goods to the buyer for no less than 30 million won. Even if the other side doesn't purchase it out of hesitation, he would still receive the equivalent of 10%, which was 3,000,000 won.

“Made 3 million won.”

Lee Hyun promptly put the additional income into the household accounts book.

Titri Ring!

A loud ringing sound echoed. Lee Hyun felt uncomfortable and was wondering whether or not he should pick up the receiver.

‘There's no way they'll say it was a mistake and cancel the auction.’

It might just be phone call like that. Biting his nails, Lee Hyun heartily spoke into the headset.

“Hello.”

- Ah, I'm the person who won the auction. Minotaur's Claws, you placed this item on the site did you not?

The voice coming from the phone was mixed with impatience. Lee Hyun's eyes darkened.

‘Of course!’

Hearing that, he thought the person wanted to ask to cancel the auction altogether rather than just give up on the purchase. Lee Hyun raised his voice and replied.

“What are you talking about, such people don't live here!”

Lee Hyun's instantaneous wit! With these words you would normally step down, but the other side did not oblige.

- Is there anybody there that plays Royal Road?

“Yes? What road?”

- Royal Road, using the character name Weed, is there someone like that?

Lee Hyun replied bluntly.

“I don’t know those people.”

-There’s no doubt this is the correct number.”

“I don’t know what business you have but I’m busy so I’m hanging up.”

- Come on, wait a minute! The item trading credit rating is high and a few transactions are listed so this can’t be the wrong number.

" ... "

The rationale of the other side was talking about him. Lee Hyun hesitated for a second and did not give an answer.

-Right now I very urgently need to speak with him. If not in person, then please arrange for me to talk with him at any time. Really, my mind’s been so restless that I forgot to introduce myself. I am KMC Media’s Planning Department’s Manager Kang Han Seo.

“KMC Media?”

There was probably no one among those who played Royal Road that did not know this highly popular broadcasting company.

- I really need to speak with the person that uses the character name Weed. Can you contact him for me?

Again the request came, Lee Hyun's mind wavered.

‘His words don't seem like he wants to cancel the auction.’

He noticed that it seemed like some very important business. Lee Hyun, conflicted for a moment concluded.

“I am Lee Hyun. I use the character name Weed in Royal Road.

- Oh, so it's like that. But a little while before why?

"..."

- Well, that's not important. I need to speak with you about something important.

“Go ahead.”

- I'd prefer not speaking about this over the phone, so do you think you come down to the broadcasting station?

Lee Hyun replied without any hesitation.

“Difficult.”

- What?

“Going that far will take quite a lot of fare and I would have to change buses three times.”

He would not use transportation expenses if he could help it. At Lee Hyun’s words, the other side was stunned into silence for a moment and did not answer. But soon a voice came.

- Then ... please tell me the address and I’ll send a car there. Do you think you can take a car here?

“That is possible.”

-Then I’ll see you shortly.

Chapter 7: Profit And Loss

KMC Media wanted an appointment as soon as possible, so a vehicle was dispatched immediately.

The vehicle was an imported car.

Lee Hyun opened the door with both hands and boarded the car politely. It was the first time he'd ever rode in an imported car.

The door was closed carefully to prevent any scratches from happening. Even during the arrival at the station, Department Director Kang was waiting for him at the entrance.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Kang Han Seo.”

“I’m Lee Hyun.”

The bald, middle-aged Director Kang’s eyes lit up as he inspected Lee Hyun.

‘He’s a lot younger than I thought.’

The Hall of Fame video was magnificent, exciting, and dynamic. What he had in mind was a man in his mid-30s, but unexpectedly, the man was relatively young in his early 20s.

Director Kang casted his doubts about Lee Hyun aside.

“We can continue our conversation in the Planning Office. Right this way.”

“Yes.”

As they walked inside the broadcasting station, Director Kang told stories of the birth of KMC Media and its attempt to establish real-time broadcasting of games.

As more players joined the game, even more information is required. Royal Road’s success can not only be credited to its large continent but also its diversified jobs of over ten thousand different available professions.

There are information are unobtainable on the Internet. There were a handful of rare and hidden professions, obtained through excruciating efforts. So naturally, players who had acquired them would not want to share the information. Thus, only the common professions chosen by famous people were selected by starting players in overflowing numbers.

Through quest rewards and broadcasting, several promising new jobs were uncovered. Not only Professions.

Unexploited areas throughout the vast Versailles continent, where you can be introduced to a quest with specific rewards. By doing so, players can experience different kinds of enjoyment in

Royal Road.

The Department Director Kang said with conviction.

“One of the ways to inform players is through broadcasting. Overall, it is beneficiary. It has attained great accomplishment by allowing secondary or tertiary players to enjoy playing together. Royal Road and broadcasting are already inseparable.”

Director Kang continued talking about the new role of broadcasting and its concept, which Lee Hyun did not pay much attention to. Broadcasting was soaring thanks to their high amount of loyal viewers.

In the end, the conclusion he came to a conclusion.

‘Broadcasting earns money from stories.’

There is money where people gather.

Broadcasting programs associated with Royal Road was popular in Korea and abroad. It was not limited to broadcasting. It extends to various industries such as movies, comic books, novels, and toys based on famous characters. Lee Hyun was, in a sense part of the industry by selling items from the game to make money.

“This is the Planning Department.”

Director Kang then led Lee Hyun into a private room.

Lee Hyun could've sworn that the employees eyes lit up as he walked to the private room in the Planning Department because he was the protagonist with the character named Weed, and he was young.

The room had comfy couches where the Director can meet with guest. Lee Hyun sat on the opposite side of Planning Director Kang and his staff. Director Kang immediately began asking him some general questions.

“Excuse me for asking Lee Hyun, but could you tell us your level?”

“Do I have to tell you?”

“You don't have to tell us, but I recommended that you do because it could be helpful”

“Well, let's say it's 306.”

“306, huh?”

Director Kang and his staff had eyes that showed disbelief.

“Are you sure it's 306? If you don't want to disclose it, you can tell us privately.”

“It really is 306. By completing that last quest, I’ve gained a total of 20 level which caused by level to rise.”

“Impossible!”

“Is there something wrong with that?”

“No, I’m just a little surprised.”

Planning Director Kang and his staff were stunned.

KMC media had seen a lot of high level users while working in the industry. The majority of the users were above level 370! Of course it is surprise that Lee Hyun, with his level 306 character, was able to complete a quest of an A rank difficulty.

‘No. Prior to this, all quests that were given were reported to reflect the user’s level or lower...!’

Director Kang and the rest of his staff shook their heads, calculating the probability of this situation because it was too absurd.

‘No matter how the Orcs and Dark Elves were commanded, clearing the quest was ridiculous.’

After drinking a glass of water, Director Kang said.

“Anyway. May we ask what your profession is?”

“Profession...”

Lee Hyun hesitated. It was embarrassing to reveal that his profession was a Sculptor!

Director Kang and the staff completely misunderstood his hesitation.

‘Oh, he must have a very good job!’

‘Yeah! It was because of his profession that he was able to complete the quest!’

‘An Adventurer, maybe? The quest does require the innate ability of an Adventurer.’

Lee Hyun hesitated at that moment before speaking.

“I’m a sculptor.”

“What?”

“My profession is Moonlight Sculptor.”

"....."

The planning room went silent.

A Sculptor!

It was an Artist profession that everyone had forgotten ever existed, that completed the quest? Project Director Kang could barely hold his laughter.

“Cool. It is great to hear that you are a Sculptor. Recently, Production and Art professions are becoming more popular in Royal Road.”

“I’ll have to agree. The profession of a Sculptor seems really fancy.”

While the others were either embarrassed or ashamed. They didn’t think that a Sculptor could accomplish such feat.

Various growth progress.

Many Artisan professions, such as a Sculptor, have low combative skills; therefore need to join hunting parties and survival techniques. If directly involved with the battle, those with higher stat held the advantage. With a high Endurance stat, it allows them to fight for a long time and not get tired.

As something popped in his head, Director Kang said.

“Oh! Come to think of it, a while back, a Sculptor shamelessly exploited the labor of players in Rosenheim Kingdom. Building a pyramid and savagely ate grass porridge.”

“That really happened? The world is an odd place.”

Lee Hyun blurted out in surprised.

“Yes, thanks to that, there was quite a rise in viewership. So how long have you been playing Royal Road?”

“For a little over a year”

"....."

This time the silence lasted a little longer.

Royal Road has been released for 2 and half years. Most accomplished players began playing during the beginning stages.

‘1 year, in a short period of time, he had grown enough to complete the prestigious A rank quest?’

‘How did he do to be able to gain over 300 levels in a year?’

Director Kang and the Planning Department staff's opinion of Lee Hyun was depreciating.

‘Great, a total charlatan is just what we need.’

‘A guy with severe pretentions.’

‘Maybe it's because of his young age.’

In a case where one plays for 18 to 20 hours a day, can lead to a misunderstanding.

Lee Hyun's level growth was not an easy thing to accomplish. Though it might take some time, the best way to level up is to increase their abilities.

Only someone with great patience can attempt to be a Sculptor and get to an adequate level. Spent a month sewing, a month of smithing, and three months fishing. Alternating with the ability to endure boredom!

Sometimes hunted monsters without breaks. Created sculptures in between break times. It was almost impossible to endure hard labor and succeed.

After asking a few more trivial questions, Director Kang got down to business.

“Actually Lee Hyun, the reason why we asked you to come down to the broadcasting station is to have you sign a contract with us.”

“Contract?”

“Yes, a short-term broadcasting contract.”

“Broadcasting contract. Specifically, what is its content?”

“It was you who joined forces with the Orcs and battled against the Undead Legion, right?”

Lee Hyun nodded in agreement.

“I figured as much.”

From time to time, there are people who came in contact with broadcasting stations. They would be questioned about their levels and professions, and it is always certain they would not hide it.

Director Kang showed great delight.

“I saw the video that was posted in the Hall of Fame. Your quest is enough to make lots of players fascinated. Do you think that our broadcasting station could broadcast your quest? Truth be told, our generic earnings and profits are all based on the ratings and viewership of our programs. When Lee Hyun’s quest is shown during one of the broadcasts, the viewership will increase.”

“And in case the ratings are low?”

“Although that is unlikely, we will be happy to pay you the basic amount.”

After pondering, he concluded that it wouldn't cause him any harm. By giving rights to the broadcasting station, he would earn more money than posting it on the Hall of Fame.

“I see. That's good.”

“That's great. If you are willing, we'll have you sign an exclusive contract with our station.”

"How is an exclusive contract different? Do I have to come down to the station and make appearances? Chat with beautiful hosts like a Singer, or go to meetings in order to get viewership?"

The people in the room had astonished faces when Lee Hyun finished speaking.

‘Does he even look in the mirror?’

‘Celebrities can attract millions of fan girls scattered in the garden...’

‘All for increasing viewership!’

Director Kang wiped the sweat off his forehead with a towel.

“Not really. There’s no need for you to make an appearance in the broadcasts. Lee Hyun, you have a recording of your quest, right? We’d like for you to send it to the station.” [1]

“So it’s like that”

“Lee Hyun, by having an exclusive contract with us, Lee Hyun’s quest progress can be seen here at the station and broadcasted immediately.”

“Ah, that’s what you meant.”

Lee Hyun smiled briefly at his good fortune.

When it comes down to it, every time viewers laughed and enjoy the broadcasting station's show, that's when hard work really pays off. Director Kang and the rest of the Planning Department staff breathe a sigh of relief.

‘Whew, it was a misunderstanding.’

‘What a relief.’

‘Somehow, we passed the critical moment.’

Director Kang took out the documents.

“Here’s the contract. Please sign this document if you agree to broadcast your quests in our broadcasting station. You should know that we will not broadcast all of your quests. And we might also adjust the broadcasting time if necessary.”

“Why is that so?”

“It will be difficult not to disclose an important quest. During those times, the broadcasting station will adjust their schedule to give way to broadcast the quest.”

“The ratings of the program would be important.”

“It is not the only factor with take into account Lee Hyun. As you know, broadcasting stations are considered a company. Even if the quest is successful, the broadcast of the quest will be intentionally delayed which benefits both sides. Depending on Lee Hyun’s decision, the rewards of the quest would be revealed.”

“Then that’s not too bad.”

“For more information, you should first read the contract. And if you have any other question, please ask me.”

Lee Hyun contemplated and then read the contract.

From an unknown source of information, broadcasters can usually find information of rare quest, hidden quest, and a B rank difficulty quest. Programs were broadcasted were based on such information. Being bold in the field of broadcasting pays off as shown in the program ratings.

‘Sounds good.’

Until now, he’s only focused on the loot. If he has already got what he wanted, any rewards he receives from the quest would be meaningless.

If you’ve obtained a complex quest, spent a lot of time on it, there’s a chance of failing. But you will be able to earn money through these kinds of quests.

“I’m ready to sign the contract.”

“You have to answer some basic personal information and sign it.”

Lee Hyun signed the written contract.

*

The Director of the Planning Department saw Lee Hyun off and had just returned.

The employees said in unison.

“Director.”

“What?”

“There is one significantly minor problem.”

“What is it?”

The staff showed Lee Hyun’s signed contract and saw how hard it was to read his lousy handwriting.

Director Kang narrowed his eyes.

“This person’s handwriting is difficult to read.”

“I find it hard to read as well.”

In any case, once the written contract has been signed, the contract is established.

Spending a couple of days checking the Hall of Fame and the auction site, Director Kang sat on his chair, exhausted.

“Now I feel completely unrestrained.”

“Congratulations, Director.”

Likewise, the Planning Department was also at ease. Because they were always extremely busy with their job, without these small senses of accomplishment, they would have already quit.

“Director. How long would it take for the video to arrive?”

“1 hour perhaps? It will take him that long to get home from the station and when he arrives home, he’ll send the video”

“It would be great if it arrived sooner.”

The Planning Department had all been waiting for Lee Hyun to send the video. As soon as Lee Hyun got home, he had sent them the video of his gameplay and the quest.

Just as the lunch hour had approached, Director Kang left all the Planning Department staff to do their own things and simply waited for the video's arrival.

Soon after, one of the employees who was looking at their computer, shouted.

“It’s here!”

“Really?”

Director Kang was delighted. The Planning Department staffs were pleased.

“Play it on the main screen for us to watch.”

“Alright, Director.”

One of the Planning Department staff maneuvered the computer to play the video on the screen, but Director Kang felt his tummy grumbled.

“But shouldn’t we have lunch first?”

“Director, may we watch and eat at the same time?”

The staff knew that Lee Hyun’s video was something they wouldn’t want to miss. Director Kang was eager to find out if the results of the Legions of Undead quest were true.

“Why not? Let’s order some take-out.”

“Yes. I’ll order it immediately.”

Director Kang sat down with the rest of the staff.

Just as the video was about to play on the screen, the door opened and the Station Director walked in.

“Director Kang, I trust you have acquired the contract?”

He had heard that Lee Hyun came to the station.

“Yes. It went very well.”

“Will you be the one to organize the broadcast?”

“I also want to edit the video and the audio, if necessary, so it’ll fit the time schedule of the broadcast.”

“It’s not good to delay it for too long. I want it done as soon as possible.”

“Yes. We will do as you say, Director.”

Director Kang inclined his waist and bowed. A thorough worker’s attitude.

“But what is the hurry Director Kang? The employees have all gathered here when they should be eating lunch.”

“Actually, the video had arrived. I told the staff that that we will watch it while we eat.”

“Is that so?”

Director Kang revealed the video's content. It was about the Orcs and Dark Elves battling together, and he was excited to see it.

“Director Kang, could I possibly watch as well?”

“It would be an honor if the Station Director would watch it with us.”

“Well, in that case, I'll also call the Program Director. Actually, except for those who are busy, let's call everyone who participated in the last meeting to the conference room.”

Nobody opposed to the Director's suggestion. It was much better to watch the video in the Conference Room with state of the art surround sound and screen rather than watching it in the Planning Department.

The Station Director, Director Kang, and the Planning Department staff went to the conference room, ordered a meal, and sat down. The Program Director also arrived and sat down, and waited for the movie to play.

Soon the lights went out and the sound from the video began to reverberate. With surround sound, the feeling of immersion can be felt.

- Black smoke obscuring the red sun. Chwiik! In the land of darkness, where the birds do not sing. Chwikchwik!

The ugly Orc Karichwi appeared.

“Ohhhh!”

“Karichwi!”

Some female fans within the staff cheered quietly.

Their behavior is understandable if he was charming but it's a puzzle when he has an unattractive face.

Overnight, Karichwi became popular among females everywhere.

The Director laughed with satisfaction.

‘It's good that Karichwi was popular even amongst our employees.’

It's intolerable if the staff and Station Director do not enjoy the video. They're like a person's immune system. Needless to say, if it's not popular with the staff, the viewers will probably not like it.

“Director Kang.”

“Yes, Station Director.”

“Could you tell me the duration of this video?”

The Station Director asked as Karichwi began to sing. Director Kang took a moment to check and then replied in a small voice.

“It is twenty one hours long.”

"....."

“He sent us the original video. It looks like it hasn’t been edited. What would you like for us to do? Do you want us to skip to the important parts or would you like to play it a little faster?”

“Let’s just see what happens.”

The glaive gave off a reddish depressing light overshadowing the sky and Karichwi.

What an atmosphere!

Kukwakwakwa!

Burning Skeletons and Zombies began to emerge from the valleys.

“Kyaa!”

Some female employees began screaming at the bloody appearances of the Undead, but it was a scream of astonishment. Their eyes were glued to the screen, as their lips formed a curious smile.

As the Orcs and the Dark Elves’ battle with the Legions of Undead progresses, Director Kang gasped and clenched his fist a couple of times.

The eight Castle walls didn’t seem sturdy and their anxiety reflected in their eyes. Relying on such walls during an important battle was nerve-wracking. [ii]

Then the lunch they had ordered arrived.

However, because of the intense video, there was only one person who laid a hand on the packed lunches.

The battle begun when the Burning Skeletons and Zombies arrived. And then the second and third branch of Legions of Undead army came out for an ambush!

Thousands of Silver Arrows were shot out of Elastic Bows.

“How much is all of that?!”

“He must be a rich!”

They were led to misunderstand the frailty of the walls.

Under the commands of Karichwi, the Dark Elves defended the walls with the help of the Wyverns, by flying around the sky while sprinkling Holy Water without care of getting their hands wet.

Not to mention the bravery of the Orcs.

Ancient Giant Monsters were fought by Soldiers who worked side by side with Orcs!

Without a single one killed, the Necromancers played a big role.

Even without showing their true powers, the Necromancers were formidable opponents, which was evident from the rate they were summoning Undead.

And then finally the Shire Lich appeared!

The Lich's power was overwhelming. Being able to rapidly fire and area of effect magic, was completely devastating.

Among the Orcs, Dark Elves, and Undead an order to come forth was heard.

A vampire and Death Knight appeared.

It was an amazing scene.

The Lich Shire pounced against his enemies like tiger, creating absolute havoc. As a level 400 boss monster, his overwhelming power was evident.

The Lich Shire roared, as he faced countless enemies!

Rampant Area of Effect magic.

Wyverns risked their lives sprinkling holy water on the ground.

The tremendous power that the Lich Shire had shown gradually weakened.

The Lich Shire tempted the Vampire Lord.

Only then did Karichwi join the battle. Without a doubt, the situation turned sour and the Lich Shire did not die in the hands of Karichwi. It was the Dark Elves who casted a large Area of Effect magic that ended the battle.

The Station Director unwittingly murmured.

“Was it a success? A failure?”

Director Kang replied.

“A source reported that the quest was a success.”

“I see.”

The Station Director took a look around.

The clock hanging on the wall showed it to be precisely 9 in the morning. They had stayed up all night watching the video. This caused them to have bloodshot eyes.

It wasn't surprising that nobody wanted to go bathroom in the middle of the video. If they did, they went quickly. It's the first time in several decades that they had to hold it in.

Station Director and Director Kang opened yesterday's lunch, which has already grown cold, and started having a conversation.

“Director Kang. How does our broadcasting schedule look?”

“Today, there are some important broadcasts scheduled.”

“Can we possibly cancel it?”

“Let me see if that’s possible.”

Director Kang examined the matter.

The Station Director agrees that we should broadcast this video as soon as possible!

The Director added.

“It will not be enough to just briefly introduce this amongst our other broadcasting programs.”

“Yes. Special programs must be organized separately.”

“As soon as possible.”

Unfortunately, Director Kang inconveniently said.

“If possible, I would like to have it broadcasted before dinner. The audio and the video will only need some minor adjustments. We certainly lack the time. I’m sure it’s worth having it broadcasted before dinner and have it run overnight.”

“Please edit the video to a minimum. You don’t have to cut down on the hours. Broadcast a short segment of the video, and then post information on our broadcasting station’s website.”

“I’ll do just that. Although I think it’s possible to broadcast the original copy of the video.”

“There wasn’t a single dull moment.”

Station Director and Director Kang smiled satisfactorily.

*

Lee Hyun was happily writing on the household bookkeeping ledger.

“Easy money. I haven’t calculated a budget yet, but money keeps rolling!”

The broadcasting station's incentive contract!

The money he would receive varied greatly depending on the audience. Nevertheless, he received the Broadcasting Company’s contract deposit from the bid on Minotaurus Claws.

“However, I still need to earn more. This will only last for a while.”

For now, there was no need to worry about his grandmother’s medical bills and living expenses. The problem was his sister’s future.

University tuition is rising annually. For one year in University, it cost 10,000,000 won. Therefore for 4 years, it's quadruple the amount, 40,000,000 won! [iii]

In addition, the Student Association decreed that students have to pay for their own textbooks.

Money that could be spent elsewhere was spent only on school. Money spent on Membership Training and University Festival isn't included. You'll also need money to join clubs, cosmetics, and clothes to keep basic dignity of University students.

People don't want to live with the feeling of having someone superior to them.

To meet up with friends cost money, but it cost even more money to pursue knowledge and education in school.

"I could buy a new computer with this money."

A very small portable computer.

Lee Hyun's handwriting differs from a computer because it's so small that it's hardly legible. Many of the school's lesson and clubs depend on computers.

The price varies. For a really good one, it could cost billions of won, and a cheap one is at least 5 million won. It was an essential item for University students.

“It doesn’t end there.”

He dropped out of school to seek employment. Nowadays, if you wish to find a job and live in luxury, you have to graduate from University. It was worth the sacrifice to develop the slightest ability.

“If I didn’t learn, I couldn’t earn money in this world.”

*

Lee Hyun recalled a painful memory.

He had tried to forget the bitterness against others during his younger days. Stitching clothes in a sewing factory while listening to countless lectures. Mistakes were present no matter how hard he worked, followed by insults of his incompetence.

He also had to work late at night, doing some odd jobs, while not being paid overtime.

He had a fixed monthly periodic salary!

Even if he worked hard, he received less money than those people who sleep on the job, Lee Hyun swore as tears flowed out.

Although it was common to report cases of mistreatment, he

couldn't. The Vice President of the company cleverly used his illegal age of employment against him and threatened to report him to the Ministry of Labor.

If you get reported to the Ministry of Labor, you will not receive your salary. Furthermore, you will be blacklisted and from then on, you will not be able to find a new job.

Because he had to earn money in harsh conditions, he wanted his sister to find a proper job in a normal business, preferably a corporate job.

“In order to do well in school, absorb everything. A portable computer is something she must have.”

Lee Hyun decided that everything he earns will go towards his sister's education. There are a lot of things needed as a college student. For a time like that, an emergency fund is needed.

“Ah, I have to visit Grandma at the hospital today.”

Lee Hyun budgeted the household finances and kept the book.

He had been busy lately trying to complete the quest that he had not had the time to visit. But today, was the day they had promised to visit Grandma.

Lee Hyun left the house to visit Grandma.

*

Grandma and Hayan were already together.

“Is this really an acceptance letter for a university? You’re not lying?”

“Achaa! I would never lie to my grandmother. Look the name’s clearly written here.”

“Even though, I still cannot believe it.”

Grandma could not hide her surprise over the acceptance letter to the University of South Korea. Lee Hyun was accepted to University!

This was something beyond her imagination.

Although it came as a surprise, she and Hayan were glad that it occurred.

‘I never thought he’d get this far when he had the interview...’

Who would have thought he’d get accepted.

Lee Hayan did not rejoice, instead she thought.

‘Ah, if oppa only knew the truth, it’d be a big deal.’

He’ll be mad if he found out that I lied to him. The real problem was Lee Hyun would grind his teeth if he has to spend 100 won daily to go to University.

Grandma smiled and then laughed.

“It’s not as complicated as you think, sweetheart.”

“Really?”

“There’s nothing to worry about, I have an idea.”

“If that’s the case, I will trust Grandma.”

*

When Lee Hyun got to his grandmother’s hospital room, Lee Hyan’s head was bowed. His grandmother was about to say something, but stopped.

Lee Hyun quickly came to her side.

“Grandma, what’s going on?”

“You don’t have to know.”

From his grandmother's attitude, Lee Hyun could feel an unusual aura. In addition, his little sister still had her head bowed.

“Did you give Hayan another scolding? To my knowledge, she has been studying properly, and she hasn’t hung out with any shady people.”

“That’s not it.”

“Then, what’s the matter...”

“Why don’t you go to University.”

Grandma said it as if the matter was already settled.

“Did you say something?”

“Yes. You should go to University to have a better livelihood. You haven’t made decent money since you dropped out of high school.”

“Surely Grandma! There’s no difference, now that I’ve passed my GED and graduated from high school.”

Lee Hyun tried to convince his grandmother with soft, gentle words but she didn’t budge.

“You have worked hard to earn the money, how could you not spend it? As the head of the family, it’ll be difficult to make money if you don’t attend University and gain an education.”

“University is useless, Grandma. If ever I want to learn about something, I could always study about it in the future.”

“Hyun - ah, let’s say you didn’t have to take care and protect your sister. Would you have not gone to University?”

Lee Hyun tossed the thought aside and nodded his head immediately.

“Obviously. But I still think you should go to University.”

“What?”

“It is as I’ve said.”

You can’t get full off of one spoonful of rice.

Grandma and Hayan’s eyes met each other. But Hayan shook her head slightly.

‘It’s a little lacking.’

This was certainly not enough to persuade Lee Hyun. It needs to be done properly, without leaving any loopholes of escape.

Grandma paused for a moment.

Her expression was filled with distress.

Lee Hyun was an expert on flattery, so how in the world would Grandma convince him.

After selling goods in the market for decades, it did not occur that Grandma was a veteran. She had more experience in flattery, to get people to buy her items.

With an obstinate wayward expression, Grandma said.

“It’s a different story if your sister has already been accepted to University. Right now, there is no longer a need for you to save up for your sister’s education. I explained it to Hayan, and understand this as well.”

“Grandma!”

Lee Hyun was startled.

His grandmother sounded opposed to having his sister getting accepted to University.

“What are you saying? Hayan going to University is a good thing.”

“Do you really think that this is a good thing?”

“Of course. If she goes to University, she could study Liberal Arts.”

“But you’ll have to spend a lot of money.”

“I don’t care if I have to spend a lot of money. Because if you study hard in University you will reap a lot of benefits from it.”

“Then if you also get accepted to University, you should certainly go.”

“That is ...”

Strangely enough, Lee Hyun couldn’t any words to say. He felt disadvantageous but it was too late to retreat now.

‘What’ the hell is happening?’

As if it was natural, Lee Hyun replied.

“Of course. If I get accepted to University, I would probably go. So I would spend the money to send my sister instead. Hayan is

very talented when it comes to studying. Her grades improve on every exam.”

“Is that so? You’ll go to University if you had the chance. However, your words will mean nothing if you don’t attend University.”

“Yes?”

Grandma lips formed a satisfied smile. She handed him a notice written on a sheet of paper.

“Here’s the acceptance letter to University of South Korea.”

“This is really..!”

Lee Hyun’s hands trembled.

An acceptance letter to University of South Korea!

‘At last, Hayan got accepted to University of South Korea!’

He left thrilled and glad that it left him out of words.

Grandma said.

“Hyun-ah, congratulations on your acceptance to University of

South Korea. You'll be a college student next year."

*

The forum of the broadcasting station was frantic because of the Legions of Undead video. Although the quest was a success, people were wondering why they still haven't released the video.

KMC Media did not use any additional promotion. Nevertheless, there were rumors that a contract has been signed regarding the Legions of Undead. Just between the Station Director, the Planning Director, and other employees, caused the news to spread.

- Please show us the video quickly.

- Why haven't you broadcasted it yet?

People who posted on the forums were quite anxious.

KMC Media were worked as quickly as possible. But to edit the original length of the video and cut it down to 1 hour before broadcasting it, would take a couple of days to accomplish.

So they were forced to make a decision without the Program Director.

"Let's just do the broadcast."

“I’ll take responsibility for it.”

Actually, there wasn’t a need to work on the video.

They didn’t to interfere with certain scenes by giving it some special effects or subtitle on the original footage. So, they had to abandon the idea.

“It’ll be broadcast as it is.”

“However, some people might lose interest quickly.”

They also enjoyed watching the video very much. They didn't regret watching it. They think that the viewers would also find it interesting, and started the broadcast.

The broadcast started without any notice.

Because there was no schedule, the viewers couldn't have known that it was going to be shown and its duration. The broadcast suddenly started. Nevertheless, they somehow knew. The news was soon spread throughout the Internet.

The viewership grew exponentially. And when the broadcast ended, the viewership count was more than twice as usual.

Again, the forums were in overflowing with posts.

- I wasn't able to watch from the beginning. Please broadcast it again.

- When would be able to watch this again?

The broadcasters who were observing revealed a cold smile.

This brought in more profit for KMC media because awareness is equivalent to money earned. There were a lot of people who wanted more information about the Orc Karichwi and Weed.

*

“I have to get out of this situation.”

Lee Hyun was troubled. He never thought this would happen. What kind of University would accept someone who is only good at playing games?

“Are they some kind of a scammer group? Those shameless bastards who extort tuition fees out of students?”

In this day and age, multimillion businesses only sought out the students from the best Universities. Truthfully, Lee Hyun has little benefit from this admission. It would be similar from extorting money from him.

“They’re probably hiding somewhere around the corner waiting for the chance to take the money.”

Nothing in the world can change regrets.

His grandmother already said that he has to go to University. His sister was also there to listen.

There were a lot of things that Lee Hyun abandoned because he promised himself that he would do anything to get his sister accepted to University. Lee Hyun didn't want to go to University because of the money and he didn't have anything he wanted to pursue.

It was her third year in high school. It’s the most critical moment of her life, but he couldn't figure out what was going on in her head.

Lee Hyun had no choice but to compromise.

‘Even if I got accepted to University, it doesn't mean I have to attend. However, if I give up on the acceptance to University, Hayan will also not to enroll to one. But if Hayan gets admitted to a University with full scholarship, I will attend University. That sounds like a nice compromise.’

He was able to think of an ultimatum.

Grandma and Hayan were persuaded with the idea. They look

some time to think about it and then agreed.

‘If she studies really hard, it’ll be sufficient enough to get a scholarship.’

Lee Hayan was pretty smart, unlike him. However, even if she was to study real hard and get accept to University, there it wasn't certain that she’ll be able to receive a scholarship because there are other factors. But nowadays, scholarships are based on grades. It will not be a surprise for her to receive one.

‘Wait a minute! It’s good that Hayan will be studying hard to get a scholarship, but doesn’t this mean that I’ll be attending University next year?’

There was less than one year until enrollment day. Only seven months away before you receive the admission letter, there wasn’t much time left.

Lee Hyun's face looked rigid.

University, overflowing with youth and romance!

This fantasy was something he had long abandoned.

“Other brother and sister studying together.”

Lee Hyun’s currently 22 years old, 23 as of next year.

It cost a lot of money to go to University and back. Lee Hyun was already getting worried. Of all things, University was one of those places that motivate youth to turn into mature working adults.

The meals in the cafeteria were expensive and tasted disgusting in contrast to food he cooked himself with cheap ingredients.

“It must be the age.”

Lee Hyun was definitely not in the normal age group to attend University.

Chapter 8: Trail Of Death

When Weed came online, the hard working Mapan, Pale, and Irene were already connected. Romuna, Surka, Hwaryeong, Zephyr, and Geomchis soon came online as well.

“Now, what should we do?”

Pale looked at Weed. Weed didn't have anything special to say so he talked about general things.

“We should buy the supplies needed for the trip and go to the Horom Mountain. What else do we need?”

“Snacks! We should buy lots of snacks.”

Geomchi made an opinion, and that was soon made into a consensus. Irene and Surka missed Weed's cooking skills so much.

“It's been awhile since Weed cooked for us.”

“That's right. I want to eat Weed's delicious food.”

“Wouldn't eating meat in the mountains be the best?”

Zephyr's appetite grew larger. Then, Geomchi3 tapped his shoulder.

“Huh huh, It seems like you know the taste of meat very well.”

“Yes, of course. Doesn’t meat taste better in a wide open environment rather than eating at home alone?”

“Right, right! That’s true.”

Zephyr and Geomchi agreed on eating.

Former fisherman Zephyr! In fact, you can only become a fisher if you are not lazy.

You had to sit in one place and enjoy fishing while eating fish dishes!

Zephyr remembered every dish Weed made.

Weed decided to follow the aggressive opinions of the party.

“Then I will simply buy condiments and cooking tools.”

“I’ll guide you.”

Mapan accurately remembered the vendors of the Dark Elf Castle. As a merchant, it was a necessary skill.

Weed and Mapan circled the Dark Elf Castle once. The purchases were usually some spices and condiments. They bought twice the amount of a day's worth of groceries.

“We can find meat there so we should buy roughly. Fresh meat is good.”

It was Geomchis' opinion. Weed also didn't buy ingredients from stores often.

“Then should we do it like that?”

Weed and the party left the Dark Elf Castle as if they were on a light picnic.

“Now, let's go.”

“Wa, it's mountain hiking!”

“Let's go! We should go and eat grill meat!”

The party excitedly headed towards the direction where Horom Mountain is said to be located.

It was really enjoyable to climb up the mountain. The gentle breeze was cool, flowers bloomed everywhere. Butterflies flew, birds chirped.

“It feels like we really came here to play.”

Hwaryeong was very happy. The feeling of strolling in the mountains like this was the best.

Walking along the path made in between the trees carefully, following the person in front. Telling stories while walking, seemed like it was going to be a great memory.

Everyone else felt the same way.

'Who knew there was a peaceful place like this?'

'We only tried to level up so far so we lived too deserted.'

'We should have times like this.'

'Walking while gaining fame and information, it's not too bad.'

Then Surka was impressed when she saw a deep hole in the ground.

“Wow! It's amazing! How can a big hole be in a mountain like this?”

Weed replied casually.

“They are the footprints of a monster.”

“Th, This is a footprint?”

“Yes.”

When they travelled a little further, trees were scattered everywhere.

“It's the mysteries of nature. I wonder if a tempest came.”

Weed glanced and identified the situation. It was a familiar terrain.

“It looks like the monsters fought here.”

“A Monsters fight?”

“The damage indicates a fight between mid-level monsters.”

“Hiccup”

The party then noticed the seriousness of the situation a little bit.

‘The place we are in is the Yuroki Mountain range’

The Rosenheim Kingdom is a relatively safe place. At least there is a low chance of dying there. However, in the Yuroki Mountain range, you have to risk your life.

“I will look around.”

Pale headed first, Zephyr and Surka also went into the surrounding range. So when a monster appears, they can perform their best. Geomchis also took out their swords.

Weed didn't find it necessary to do that, but he didn't stop the party from doing so. In the territory of the Dark Elves and the Orcs, there was not that many strong monsters. Strong monsters only appear in the far and outlying park of the mountain range.

Really dangerous monsters lived in the red forests or gorges.

While hunting with the Orcs, Weed knew well about the dangers of the Yuroki Mountains. There were a lot of places he hasn't been, but he at least recognized the types of the monsters residing in it.

‘They say the Yetis live in the Horom Mountain. We have faced Yetis before.’

The Elder of Orcs did not ever talk about the Horom Mountain. They said that the trail was a little harsh, and monsters did not reside much.

‘Yeah, Yetis are no big deal.’

Weed could move freely because he acquired a lot of information about the Horom Mountain.

You could easily find the Horom Mountain due to the many mysterious trees and rock.

The movement of the party resembled a light walk!

They thought of the Horom Mountain as a simple neighbourhood hill. But when they saw the actual mountain, the height was enormous.

They tilted their head way back, but they still couldn't see the top. It was covered entirely by clouds.

“It's pretty high.”

The slope was fairly dangerous. It almost looked as if they were climbing stairs. It's like a mountain with more rocks than trees.

“Wow! If we make it up to the top of the mountain, the view is going to be great.”

Everybody agreed with Hwaryeong.

‘We will be able to see the view on our way up.’

‘The sun is hot but the wind is fresh, it is the best weather for mountain climbing.’

The party started climbing.

It’s been 2 hours since they entered the mountain!

The monsters are nowhere to be found, they only repeated climbing flatly.

Geomchi stretched and spoke looking bored.

“Weed.”

“Yes.”

“Shouldn’t we eat since we’ve climbed so far? We were going to eat at the top.....”

“Should we?”

Weed looked around. The everyone seemed hungry so as soon as he said it, they sat with a plop.

“Then we should eat here.”

“Irene, Hwaryeong. Please prepare to grill meat. Mapan please collected some firewood, Zephyr pass out the plates. It would be great if Pale would light up the fire.”

“Yes!”

Everyone hurried to make preparations to dine.

The bonfire was made, dishes and the meat from the Dark Elf Castle were soon prepared. Surka spoke as if something was missing.

Everyone hurried to make preparations to eat.

“By the way, are we only having meat?”

“No. Since we came all the way to the mountain we have to eat noodles!”

“Noodles? Where can we get them?”

“Wait a moment. I will make it quick.”

Weed added the wild greens and meat into the pot and boiled them. He was making a broth.

Then, relentlessly pounded the kneaded flour.

Tata Tak!

Touch of Weed pounding the flour!

The flour mixed into the water was kneaded. When the batter was nearly completed, he spun it around and lengthened the noodles.

He made Ramen noodles.

The handcrafted noodles were tangy and they were overflowing with richness. Weed added the Suta noodles into the boiling soup and waited a little longer.

“Now, eat before it is completely cooked.”

“Wow! It looks delicious.”

It was when Surka quickly tried to put in her eating utensils. The Geomchis put in their whole bowl into the soup.

“This is the best.”

“We have to have ramen in the mountains.”

“Yes sir! What would be better than grilling meat in the

mountains and eating ramen.”

“So refreshing. Cool!”

Weed’s popular food!

In the mountains, ramen with meat and refreshing soup is the best.

“Zzup zzup, but master.”

“What’s wrong, Geomchi2.”

“At this rate, we are going to eat all the food supplies.”

For Geomchis who ate all the Barley bread and starved, they were always sensitive to the amount of food.”

“It’s okay. We have Weed.”

“That’s right.”

“Let’s eat without worrying.”

“Yes! Master!”

Shamelessly, the Geomchis ate all the food.

The other companions also ate two or three more times the usual amount. They were in a picnic, hence they ate more.

“I ate well. Kkeueuk!”

With their bellies filled, the party felt satisfied.

“So should we start climbing again?”

Geomchi stood up taking the lead.

At this time, the tension around Weed and his companions lessened. It was a mountain. They climbed step by step and will soon reach the top.

Suddenly a thick fog began to cover the area. It wasn't long, when clouds were in view.

“Its damp.”

Hwaryeong opened both her arms.

“It's refreshing.”

Zephyr wiped his forehead. It wasn't sweat, but moisture from

the high atmosphere.

“The water is cold and refreshing. If I came here with Maylon, it would’ve been great.”

Pale spoke with a feeling of loss.

The foggy area stimulated a mystical feeling. If you came with your lover, it will be one of the best memories.

They passed the foggy area, and the view became clear again.

Weed glanced towards the top.

“We’re are almost at the top...Keuk!”

Everyone thought that they had reached the top, but no matter how much they looked up, they could not see the summit.

The clouds were blocking the view!

The people saw a breathtaking view of the mountain appearing on top of the clouds.

Even though they had walked for a long time, some might say that it was impossible to reach the top of the mountain.. At the snowcovered area, the Yeti was there.

A steep cliff!

The slope of the mountain was sharp and steep!

And there in the middle of road Yetis were living there. Because the Yetis were here, they could not advance any further.

‘This is why we haven’t seen any monsters so far.’

The gigantic Yeti monsters, with white fur, were ready to face their opponents.

“From here on lets get ready to fight.”

Weed received the party's equipment and clothes.

Swords were sharpened, armor was cleaned and ironed.

The Handicraft Skill enhanced his abilities.

Since they had already eaten, their strength and stamina were perfect for the situation.

“Ok, Irene, please bless us. Pale will distract them with his arrows. When we break up, fight them accordingly.”

The battle soon began!

Pale shot some arrows and as it descended, 3 Yetis were provoked.

“Kuwuuhhhh!”

“KulukKuluk!”

Level 340 Yeti monster!

But it was different from the monsters he hunted with Seoyoon.

“KyaoKyao!”

With his sword, Weed blocked the white furred Yetis’ attack. But chilling hex was passed on to him.

Your body is freezing.

Your strength has been reduced.

Your attack and movement speed have been slowed.

Addition effects:

You are more likely to catch a cold.

In severe cases, you can freeze to death.

High level Yeti monsters each had the special ability to deliver coldness. Indeed, this is really Yetis' breeding ground! The climate is warm, but with the elevation of the Horom Mountains, the Yetis ability to deliver coldness proved to be effective.

JjeoJeoJeok!

Weed's sword which bumped into the Yetis' claws, turned into ice.

“Beware of the Yetis claws!”

Even without warning them, the rest of his party members were already having enough trouble.

Whenever Yetis attacked, extremely cold temperature could be felt. The ice damage attack was horribly frightening, it immediately damages their vitality, strength, and slows down their movement speed.

“Bless!”

“Why is it so cold.”

“However, it's refreshing.”

Although they were also cold, the Geomchis felt glad about it.

On the other side of the Continent of Versailles, across the Plains of Despair, people had to endure the scorching weather. But depending on the person, attacking while sweating profusely, could also feel good.

Grin!

Geomchi3 and Geomchi5's eyes met. Over the years, they were able to understand each others' thoughts.

'I'll take the front.'

'Then, I'll take the back.'

Geomchi5 and Geomchi3 focused on 1 Yeti.

One person jumped out from the front, and the other one at the back. Avoiding the Yetis claws, Geomchi5 and Geomchi3 attacked mercilessly, and killed the Yeti.

A method of fighting that risked their lives!

Geomchi3 was directly in front of the Yeti, attacking its large stature while moving his body to avoid its claws. Inevitably using his sword to attack at an angle while reducing the damage taken.

Anyone would be surprised if they saw this.

With the Yeti's big stature, Geomchi3 had to avoid its attack and counterattack with a margin of a needle hole!

One critical attack, and he'll die instantly. The act was dangerous and similar to tightrope walking.

However, every time Geomchi3 landed a hit, everyone applauded.

“Wow! That is really cool.”

Geomchi3 became tolerable and immune to pain!

If you receive a direct attack in Royal Road, you'll also feel the pain. Although the maximum pain you receive is only 20% the original, it was enough to make to sting and someone sore.

Because of Geomchi3's real world experience of getting beaten up, he was able to laugh off the pain.

Geomchi was also attacking the Yeti eagerly.

“Slash, Slash, Stab!”

He targeted only the fatal vital parts.

Such as parts of the spine, and near the top of its head!

Geomchi enthusiastically wielded his sword. The power of his attacks became even stronger.

“This is fun”

“We should fight too!”

After they saw that, Geomchi₂ and Geomchi₄ went behind the Yeti.

Geomchi₃ resentfully exclaimed.

“If you’re going to help me, you should attack the front!”

“Sorry, attacking from behind seemed more fun”

“You are doing a good job, so we thought that you didn't need our help. We thought you could easily beat that monster.”

“Of course.”

Geomchi₂, Geomchi₄, Geomchi₅ violently attacked the Yeti’s back. The angry Yeti changed his plan. When they attacked, it would turn its back.

Geomchi3 switched into a defense position and caught the Yeti's attention. Doing so, his health was slowly draining away. The sword and his feet became frozen. Thus, even a little damage would result in a significant injury.

If it weren't for Irene's blessing and Weed's armor polishing skills, he would've died ages ago.

It was Geomchi3's battle of life and death with the Yeti!

Geomchi2, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5's amazing strength and their hitting the same spot at the same time eventually killed the Yeti.

Kuuung!

The sluggish body fell to the ground.

"Wow! We won!"

For Geomchi3, the ice reached the scabbard of this sword. He was frozen up to the leg and was unable to move.

While they were fighting one Yeti, Weed and Geomchis were also fighting, using the same strategy the Geomchi's used.

"Me, I'll take the front."

“Well, do as you please.”

Weed's endurance level surpassed 400; it was unparalleled to none other. Even though the Yeti hit him multiple times, the endurance level was high enough so that it barely scratched him.

Weed had already seen the attack movements of the Yeti while traveling with Seoyoon. It was dangerous, but he was able to attack the Yetis one at a time. All he had to do was take care of the cold and he would be fine.

Whenever Weed was attacking the Yeti, Geomchi also took out his sword and attacked the same place.

Instead of weak, successive attacks, the Yeti would attack Weed and hit a very strong attack. At this time, Geomchi attacked the head and the Yeti lost all its health.

Weed also defended and counterattacked so the 2 of them were able to beat the Yeti.

For the last Yeti, Zephyr took the damage while Pale, Romuna, Hwayoung, and Surka attacked it.

The Yeti was a strong monster so it was able to withstand much damage, Hwaryeong's dance did not affect it. Thus killing the Yeti took quite awhile.

But slowly, the Yeti began to lost health; eventually it died. All 3

Yeti's were killed!

We won!

Difficult monsters seized!

Powerful monsters have been slain!

Such strong monsters, if they did not combine their strengths, it would have been impossible to kill the Yetis.

Mapan lifted his head.

‘Of course as a merchant I can't do anything, so I avoid all fights.’

While watching Weed fight, it was impossible not to be amazed.

The way he was able to handle 3 Yetis all at once was overwhelming.

Even for Weed, fighting Yetis were a difficult task. Even with Irene's blessing, Weed's HP bar was slowly decreasing. However, the Yeti's health disappeared first.

If other Yeti's rushed to attack Weed while he was fighting, Hwaryeong and Pale would finish off the monsters.

However, Geomchi3, Weed, and Zephyr split the 3 Yetis. They had to fight each of the strong monsters individually. With quick wits and speed, these were attributes that no one else had. If one did not have complete faith in themselves, fighting the Yetis was an impossible task.

In these types of emergency situation, the competence of the party can be measured by how well they can adapt to the circumstances.

“The experience is no joke.”

Irene called out for her character information window and smiled. Although it was difficult to killed them, the Yetis gave tremendous amount of experience. From the dead Yetis, they were able to acquire a large stick and some ores.

Mapan took the japtem first, and placed it in his bag.

“Now, lets take on the next Yeti.”

When Pale said that, Weed discouraged the idea.

"Wait a minute Pale, there's something I must do first."

“Something you must to do?”

“We gotta take care of the loot”

Weed took out the Engraving Knife.

SagakSagak!

From the Yeti's corpse, he extracted leather and meat. He then separated the bones according to its classification.

It was only through luck that meat or leathers would dropped, but with intermediate sewing and cooking skills, he was able to extract them.

The level of his dexterity and the level mastery of his skills attributed to how much of each loot he could extract.

“I understand why you are collecting the meat, but the leather?”

Hwayoung asked, taking a seat next to Weed.

But Weed did not stop his knife.

"It's cold around the Horom Mountains. You would never know when they would become useful. And bones could be used to brew refreshments."

Weed was extracting meat, leather, and bones

There was nothing thrown away from the corpse of the Yeti. At that very instant, the Yetis' big corpse was disassembled.

Whenever Weed fought the Yetis, he collected the leather.

A hunt overflowing with thrills and suspense!

With just a small mistake, the party could be entirely wiped out. So the party was forced to focus solely on the hunt.

As often as possible, Pale would try to attract the attention of 4 or 5 Yetis all at once, but sometimes a few would try to attack Pale. When that happens, Hwaryeong would help out. She would use her special confusion skill, a technique that would put the Yetis to sleep.

“Enchanting Dance!”

An immense offensive attack!

It was foolish to dance in front of the Yeti, knowing that there is a high risk of losing her life.

Geomchi's eye lit up.

"The young lady is awesome. Her movements are very flexible."

Geomchi2 said.

"Do you think so too, Master? There's no unusual movements of the ankles and waist."

"You're right. It's a very cool dance. It seems to be at an advanced level. It cannot be learned within a day or two."

The Geomchis were analyzing Hwaryeong's movements. To the Geomchis, the body is inscribed as second to none!

However their concentration only lasted 10 seconds.

While watching Hwaryeong's dance, the Geomchis' mouth got wider little by little, and finally, they started salivating profusely.

"Heh."

"That's so cool!"

The Geomchis were not interested in the fight, but rather Hwayoung's dance!

Fortunately, at that moment, the party's great crisis came to an end, and Hwaryeong's dance concluded.

The Yetis who watched the Enchanting Dance all fell asleep with

their faces flushed.

“Keuheoheom!”

The Geomchis killed every Yeti that were not affected by Hwayoung’s dance.

Although Geomchi⁵ also thought of the situation the same way, he did not show his agreement to the same degree as Geomchi², Geomchi³, Geomchi⁴, and Geomchi.

"It is an honor to die by my sword."

“Let’s get married!”

"You must not be greedy. Young Lady, how about you try being my girlfriend just once!"

Geomchi, Geomchi², Geomchi³, and Geomchi⁴, were in their fighting spirits, and the party were able to hunt the Yeti safely.

Weed was extracting leather and meat, Geomchi², Geomchi³, and Geomchi went up to Pale.

“Pale-nim.”

“Ye-Yes!”

Pale's attention quickly diverted.

Geomchi2 and Geomchi3 looked like thugs and criminals because of their faces and their muscular bodies. The normally gentle demeanour was nowhere to be seen, and the color of their eyes were different.

The impregnable fortress which is said to hinder other people's combative spirit to the degree of no return. Something that is only attainable to normal people by going through extreme training.

Then Geomchi2 and Geomchi3 approached with a rigid face.

Geomchi5's face was flushed.

“Next time, can you bring as much as 5 Yetis?”

Geomchi3 saw Hwayoung and broadened his shoulders.

“6 is fine too.”

Geomchi2 wrapped both his hands around his face like a shy boy.

“No, you can call 7. Its not like we wanted to see Hwayoung dance.”

"....."

*

They ascended high up the Horom Mountains and the party was feeling extremely cold.

The soil ground was covered up in snow up to their knees. A sharp wind came blowing in, penetrating their necks.

"The wind is cold."

Surka shivered.

"Winds such as that will give us the cold."

Pale's body was all curled up while walking.

Coldness, compared to the rest of Versailles continent, felt like another dimension! With the immense cold, while standing still, you could turn into ice.

The Yetis intensified the cold even more.

Pale recently pulled 3 Yetis, 2 of them were put to sleep by Hwaryeong, and 1 was safely secured.

“Its cold here.”

"I'd like to go to a warmer place quickly."

The party was getting tired of the cold and wanted to leave.

Geomchi then looked up at the peak of the mountains. They had walked for quite a while, and yet the peak was still not visible. It was getting increasingly colder, and the trail was becoming steeper.

“Its really amazing that the mountain is this tall.”

Geomchi has traveled to a lot of mountains around the country.

Among those who took the path of a Martial Artist, there were quite a few people who deliberately seclude themselves in high steep mountains. And from his experience of his retreats, proves that Horom Mountain is formidable.

You can feel the severe coldness, and in more extreme cases, stats relating to combat—stamina, vitality, strength, and agility—decreases.

“Achoo!”

Surka sneezed then.

Finally, the initial symptoms of the common cold.

You have caught a cold

Physical strength is decreased by 20%

Skill effectiveness is decreased by 30%

A cold can then lead to other complications.

Maximum health and mana has been reduced.

The use of combat skills are likely to fail because of the cold.

"Although it's summer, I caught a cold. *Sniffle*!"

While sneezing Surka was seriously suffering.

The party was not capable to go any further.

Because of the cold, Yetis became considerably harder to handle, you'll catch a cold, and then lose all combat capability because of it.

Weed took out a needle and a thread, and then got to work.

He took out the leather from the Yeti that he packed before, and started cutting to make clothes.

"It doesn't need a design. Just make us warm clothes."

It was a request from Hwaryeong who is unusually exposed to enjoying different types of clothes. Irene and Romuna just wanted something warm to wear.

“Please wait a bit.”

The first clothing that Weed produced was given to Surka. The Yeti's leather was absurdly big and durable. The first part of the leather was completely cut out because it was too thick and hard, therefore the material was not appropriate clothing.

For sewing, the lighter the fabric, the more luxurious the clothing. Thus, making clothes out of rabbit or deer leather was a much better option.

Weed's sewing skills were still insufficient to sew clothings out of rustic brute leather.

‘Although it looks shabby, it'll still gives some warmth.’

The clothing Weed made out of Yeti Leather had basic designs. There were three layers added to the leather, it was thick and durable, and was made to withstand the cold outdoors.

The Yeti fur was attached separately, which gave it the finishing touches to the clothes. It looked like a white fur coat, made to withstand even the cold from the North Pole.

‘Fur clothing is good for cold climates.’

Weed completed the clothing.

Ttiring!

Clothes made from Yeti Leather:

Durability: 60/60.

Defense: 25.

Yeti leather were cut, altered, and attached to make the clothing.

Clothes were made with a delicate touch.

It prevents the coldness and the chilly winds from sipping through.

The white fur attached to the clothing will help maintain body temperature.

Requirements:

Level 150.

Strength 600

Options:

Cold Resistance 40%

When dressed in this clothing, all Yetis will be hostile.

Because of the weight, vitality decreases.

Agility 80 reduction.

If you look at the defense or the options of the clothing, it might seem useless but it was enough to keep warm.

Weed created Yeti leather boots, gloves, and hats, and handed them out to the party.

“Thank you, Weed-nim!”

Surka bowed and nodded.

Irene and Hwaryeong said their thanks and gratitudes with a big smile on their faces.

“Wow! Thank you so much. Now I think I’ll live.”

“It was nothing. It’s only natural that I would do so.”

Weed said words of humility, but deep down, he thought differently.

He had already experience the miserable cold from provinces

such as Morata and it plagued him. Catching a common cold because of lower temperatures, cold winds blew throughout the night. When the snow storm came, all he could do was moan and grunt from sickness!

He barely had the courage to beat the cold by creating a statue. He was lucky a few times thanks to his sewing skills, if not, he'd already have frozen to death several times over.

If he had frozen to death under any circumstances, there would not have been any possibility of winning the battle against the Vampires.

Because he had already experienced it before, he already knew that the coldness in Horom Mountains will get worse, little by little.

When he made the right clothing, the party could not possibly feel the coldness anymore.

Drastic and freezing temperatures!

There was no need to fear the cold wind, or fear catching a cold!

Weed deliberately made the clothes for that reason.

The party did not know how warm the clothes could be if made with sewing skills. Granted, if he had made those clothes the moment they entered the Horom Mountains.

If it was a little uncomfortable, his insufficient sewing skill is to blame.

When hungry, any food served would taste delicious and be appreciated.

“I’ll wear it well.”

Weed evenly distributed the clothing he made to the party.

Geomchi³ and Geomchi⁴ wore the clothing made out of Yeti leather and were amazed at its quality.

“After wearing these clothes, it’s not cold anymore.”

“Master, these are really warm!”

The Geomchis were wearing white fur clothing.

Weed and his entire party wore thick white fur clothes. At first glance they could be mistaken as a Polar Bear.

The Geomchis' body recovered from the cold, and their strength returned.

“Then, let’s continue the climb.”

Geomchi2 vigorously replied.

"Master, shouldn't we fight first and then climb?"

"Good. It's a start."

The Geomchis went running up the mountain eagerly. It was possible without any Yetis around.

Weed and the rest of the party were hesitant to follow the Geomchis, but they eventually ascended after a short while.

Geomchi5 suddenly looked down at the bottom of the mountain.

'A world covered in clouds.'

The clouds flew by depending on the movements of the wind.

They were at a place much higher than the altitude of castle of the Dark Elves. Lands and blue clouds stretch far and wide.

Geomchi5's bosom was filled with great morale. So in the spur of the moment, without being conscious of it, he cried out.

"Yahoo! I made it!"

From the top of the mountain, with a loud voice, sounds of screaming cheers!

“YaYaYaYa!”

“HoHoHoHoHo!”

The echo of the screams could be heard.

It was exactly what Geomchi5 had pictured in his mind. The sounds of the echo gradually got louder.

And then.....

Kureureureureureung!

Ujikkeun! Kwangkwang!

Suddenly, an audible roaring sound can be heard.

Geomchi5 turned around and looked at the summit of the mountain and his face went pale.

Not too far away, the snow that were piled up was destroyed. The crumbling snow came rolling further down.

A tremendous amount of snow has been swept away. An

Avalanche occurred.

Weed and Pale quickly hid behind some rocks to avoid it.

The ground clattered and trembled, they felt like an uncouth outrageous power had struck them.

Long after the Avalanche ended, the Geomchis were nowhere to be found. They had lost their lives to the Avalanche.

Weed and the rest of his party members inevitably had to stay and hunt the Yetis that were there.

Because of the cold climate of the Horom Mountains, they had been looking for a good place to hunt, but they could not do so until the Geomchis come back.

Normally the others would not touch anything and wait for Weed's order, but now it was a little different.

'One person alive, counts as one life saved...'

Geomchi5 could be said to be the prime culprit of the situation, now it's the rest of the party who would suffer the consequences.

Weed spent his time diligently hunting Yetis.

Geomchi had a much harder time hunting, but it was just that much more rewarding.

All except for 2 or 3 people, who were level-cautious, ran up the Horom Mountains right after Weed.

Weed could only fill about 30% of his EXP. At level 306, the experience was very difficult to obtain. Although the hunt would go on smoother with a party, the experience was less than what he would get by soloing.

When Weed was taking on the formidable Vampire Lord, Tori, he was forced to hunt to gain experience and level.

‘I’ll take care of these guys just like I did with the Death Knight.’

And Vampire Tori.

Although he might not like others to know, he could create a useful subordinate with a sculpture and then give it life. But because he would have to pay with his experience, there was no need to constantly use it.

Also, recklessly summoning the Vampire Lord Tori was also not a possibility because a supply of blood from living create must be continuously given to him.

Although to Weed, the desire was not completely abandoned.

‘Without a doubt, it was related to his quest.’

The Fargo’s crown and the Helaine’s Grail lead to the Legions of the Undead Quest!

He intuitively knew that the Vampire Lord Tori, and the Death Knight, Van Hawk, will be associated in his end quest.

In six days time, the Geomchis were back in the Versailles continent.

In exactly 24 hours from their time of death, they logged back in.

With his head bowed bow, Geomchi5 said.

“I’m so sorry. It’s my fault that our time was delayed.”

The Yeti with his waist bent, walked toward the party. Geomchi5 and Hwaryeong greeted him with a dance and a Sword.

“It’s alright. You don’t need to be so sorry. However apologizing is really masculine.”

“Yes?”

“It is really a macho apology. It is great to honestly apologize for

what happened.”

“Hwayreong-nim”

Geomchi5’s eyes were bloodshot.

With Hwayreong's gorgeous appearance and perfect body, there wasn't a possibility of not believing her words. Hwayreong was so beautiful that they would not dare talk to her.

The Geomchi2 quickly bowed.

“I’m sorry. Since I like eating, until now, I have eaten more than everyone else.”

Geomchi3 bowed respectfully.

“Please accept my sincerest apologies. While you will preparing the meals, I was being lazy.”

Geomchi3 was demonstrating a manly apology to Geomchi2!

The young Pale and Zephyr’s eyes saw something that wasn’t pleasant, they seemed desperate.

‘To try and capture a woman’s hand is in a far distant world.’

‘Should I tell them that a woman’s hand feels like a wooden sword? It felt similar to the the feel of the master’s sword.’

They apologized desperately hoping that they would be able to hold Hwaryeong’s hand

Hwaryeong liked it nevertheless. Irene, Romuna, everyone welcomed her.

Then Hwaryeong and the others looked in surprise. They didn’t know that the many Geomchi and Geomchi₃ were like this.

Plus, the very noticing Geomchi₄ climbed on top of a rock and yelled.

“Yaaaaaaaaho!”

Ashamed, Geomchi₂, Geomchi₃, and Geomchi₄ started to climb the mountain with Weed and the party.

Thanks to the Avalanche, most of the snow were swept now, and the soil can now be seen.

Arctic plants grew underneath the rocks!

Weed diligently dug out the plants and used them as ingredients. They were tired of constantly eating Yeti meat.

As they ascended, it was not easy to find Yetis. The terrain was probably too difficult for the Yetis to live in.

The party only knew that they lived in high mountainous places.

Their only memorial of the Yuroki Mountains, is climbing it. Nothing more, nothing less.

However, the higher they climbed, the more they felt they had reached their limits.

A human being in Mother Nature's vastness!

A strong wind blew, it was almost enough to cause their bodies to fly off the mountain, but they endured it until it subsided.

With their stamina almost depleted, each step taken was more laborious than the next.

They climbed the mountain on foot, but the moment they turned their heads, another world unfolded. They finally reached the summit.

Ttiring!

You are first to climb to the peak of Horom Mountain!

The highest mountain in the Yuroki Mountains!

Fame : 150 increase

Earth affinity increased by 1 %

Luck raised by 3

Because they were tired, the party found some rocks over the valley and laid down on them.

“Uwaahhh!”

“Ahhhh, it hurts!”

Their stamina was almost depleted and their legs were throbbing with exhaustion, but they endured the journey.

It was obvious that the acrophobic Surka would not have been able to climb the mountain without help.

The higher up the mountain they went, the greater their sense of accomplishment was. Thus, not a single one of them complained.

Pale said.

“Our fame increased.”

Surka checked as well and nodded her head.

“It has increased by a fairly large amount.”

It wasn't easy for them to raise their fame. It was only possible by doing quests and fighting very strong monsters.

However, the quests that could raise their fame only raised it by a marginal amounts.

Pale gruelingly said

"At first, we only climbed the mountain for the fame, but it was a great idea that we climbed it. It was indeed a rewarding experience."

Although none of the other party members voiced their feelings out loud, they all agreed with Pale.

Weed and the rest of the party took a break and laid there on the summit for a long time and rested. They looked at the scenery around them.

A lot of mountains in the Yuroki Mountains were all spread out.

The clouds and the mountains, and even the plains far away, they were all part of nature.

"This place is amazing."

Hwaryeong's eyes turned red.

The sight provided by nature was amazing.

Versailles Continent's naturally fickle climate! But because of the amazing sight, they can't be blamed for dismissing the thought.

Walking up here was more emotional than simply looking at the mountains.

The Geomchis took out their swords. They began to write on the rocks next to them.

Geomchi were here.

Without fail, Geomchi², Geomchi³, Geomchi⁴, and Geomchi⁵ also wrote on rocks. It was a Korean tradition to mark their accomplishment every time they reach a new level.

“That seems fun.”

“Shall we do it too?”

Pale and Surka laughed and wrote a message.

I want Maylon to see this.

Next time, let's come here, just the two of us.

Surka was here and left!

The party realized that they were uselessly wasting their time so they descended down the mountains.

Compared to the strength used to go up, going down was much easier. Then the party logged off one by one to take a break.

They were all mentally fatigued from climbing the Horom Mountains.

Sweeeeeeeakkkkk

The wind blew like knives in the Horom Mountains!

Weed wore his thick Yeti fur coat, and traveled back up again. He had a purpose.

‘Making a sculpture of nature here would increase my skill greatly.’

An act of creating blooming art in any gloomy places.

It was hard to breathe at the top of Horom Mountain due to the coldness and severe wind. If that can be overcome, it will be the place with an amazing, incomparable scenery.

Weed took out the Zahab Engraving Knife.

‘If I were to build a sculpture here, maybe it’ll turn out to be a Masterpiece.’

Weed went to find some big rocks at the summit.

It was currently night time. The night sky, without pollution, the stars were shining brightly.

He had to sculpt, relying on the light of the night sky.

The wind was too harsh to light a torch. In fact, the main problem was the darkness, not the cold strong winds.

The winds were so strong that it would blow you away. The winds were so strong it would freeze the sculpture.

Thankfully, he was certain that he could make the sculpture.

‘If I carve Seeyoon, I would definitely get a masterpiece.’

But Weed decided he wouldn't sculpt Seoyoon here

He had no intention of being apologetic if he coincidentally meets up with Seoyoon. He no longer wanted to be frightened of her.

He wanted to created some other sculpture this time.

“Grandmother, Hayan, me. I want to make a sculpture of my family.”

The fact that he never sculpted this always stayed on his mind.

Although, he promised not to sculpt his family until he raised his sculpting level. He began to cut the rock and began sculpting.

In the past, life was hard right after his parents died. He had to raise his younger sister which requires money. Although he had nothing, he always promised to take care of his sister.

The lighting was horrible and the air was musty and it was damp in the basement. It was his biggest dream to live in an elevated housing.

“Its high up here. You can see the sun rise and the mouse walk everyday.”

To depict life's wisdom was hard, but Weed tried his best to not think of his story.

In the wrinkled hands were anxiety and pain.

Weed looked directly and began to reminisce as he moved his Engraving Knife.

When he was carving his Grandmother's eyes, he paused for a moment. It was overflowing with emotions that he didn't know where to begin.

“But, I should do this before it gets too late.”

Weed moved his Engraving Knife diligently.

Eventually, after cutting the statue, a shape began to form.

From afar, the sun began to rise.

The sunlight shone on the sculpture and its surrounding.

The dense fog began to disappear, along with the dark features of the night sky. The sky began to lighten up, it was yet another mysteries of nature.

Weed was so focused on finishing his sculpture, that he did not realised that the sun had risen. It was different from the time when he was able to leisurely carve Wyverns. But when it's completed, the results of the advanced sculpting should grant similar rewards.

‘Looking at the sunrise will not give me a single penny.’

Perfect sense of impoverishment!

When Weed sculpts, he tries to forget his sense of time to help him concentrate.

To sculpt, he needed to gather rocks, which took up a lot of time.

While carving, he had to watch every stone he carved with his knife, and think about the sculpture. What he should create that would show emotion.

The statue of Grandma, her form was sculpted without taking any breaks.

He did not think more about the finesse details of sculpture representation. It was bound to be insufficient compared to a Professional Sculptor.

Weed included it in his thoughts. Carving until emotions could be felt. As he carved, in his mind, he started imagining and a perfect sculpture unfolded.

The Sculptor of Royal Road!

The profession of a Sculptor differs from a typical artisan profession.

Blacksmith melt ores such as iron in the hearth, and then uses molten metal to create weapons and armors.

Chefs knew recipes to some extent, but if their cooking skills were polished, they can roughly figure out what kind of dishes to cook based on the ingredients.

With Tailoring, you only need to know the basics such as cutting and stitching clothes, so it is not difficult.

The people from the Arts Profession had to work firsthand.

Only if you produced Great Works or Masterpieces, will you obtain increase in skills, which is impractical. This is the desecration of art.

A Sculptor must first draw a picture, and then carve it out to complete the artwork.

When Weed first started out, during his break times from his battles, he would spend most of it carving. He would always carve out dozens of basic artwork a day, while learning the basic fundamentals of sculpting.

Near Serabourg Castle, he carved popular sculptures such as Rabbits and Foxes, and sold them to the public, but soon after, he started carving more diverse monsters from different kinds of wood to gain more experience.

Therefore it was rare for someone to choose Sculptor as their profession unless they've gone totally insane.

Clang Clang

Grandmother's body, including her face was almost complete. But both her hand parts was deliberately connected to the other rock.

Followed by the creation of his sister's statue.

'From here on, there shouldn't be any mistakes.'

After his Grandmother's statue, Weed began working on his younger sister's statue.

Rather than a photo, in his mind, he recalled an image of a perfect family!

When he got hungry, he ate Yeti's dried meat because he didn't want to take time to eat a proper meal, just to finish his work.

When creating a sculpture, it was important to retain one's sensibility.

Weed concentrated all his efforts to create the statue of the family, and nothing else.

The statue of the family were holding hands firmly. His Grandmother's statue, she was wearing a fine dress. Thanks to his sewing skills, it wasn't hard for him to create clothing for the statue he had made.

Once he finished sculpting the statue of his Grandmother and his sister, it exudes a subtle radiance.

An Advance Effect of Sculpting!

All statues with an Advance Sculpting Effect all had different distinctive radiance depending on the climate of the statues' surroundings, and the type of materials that was used.

Weed got another piece of rock and placed it on the other side of his Grandmother. He has to now create a statue of himself.

Gracious, fine elderly Grandmother and beautiful sister!

And a statue of Weed, himself!

Creating a statue of himself was something he didn't like.

'My eyes are originally not this small.'

Weed's statue had significantly large eyes.

'In fact, the nose should be a little straighter, and the forehead, shouldn't it be slightly wider on this side? Yeah, that's right. And it should be taller!'

Weed had a height of an average Korean person, and had a rather

ordinary look. However, self satisfaction was carved into the statue.

The overall composition of his statue's image was a Hottie. Almost at the level of Celebrity hotties!

“Yeah. That’s me alright! The equally freakish me. Boohooohoo.”

Weed laughed with delight as he completed his statue.

Ttiring!

Right when the sculpture was finished, a message popped up in front of Weed.

Please set a name for the finished sculpture.

A precaution was given. Last time when he made a sculpture of Seoyoon, there was also a message that asked for a name.

When a sculpture is made and the creator is asked to give it a name, it was one of the greatest honors for a sculptor. Weed paused for a moment and said.

“Harmonious Family.”

Is Harmonious Family correct?

“Yes”

Grand Masterpiece! You have completed the Harmonious Family!

The Horom Mountains can be called the world's roof!

At a colossal height, the glorious work of a sculptor was added.

Because it was created regardless of all adversities, the delicate statue shows the creativity of the Sculptor, and it is valued even more.

Artistic value : 9,400

Special option :

Those who see the Harmonious Family will have health and mana regeneration increased by 30% for a day.

Taking a break near the sculpture will recover stamina and health very quickly.

Passing through rough terrain consumes less stamina.

Cold resistance increase by 50%

Resistance to ice magic.

All stats increase by 25

Three attributes increase by 24%

These attribute bonuses will last for a whole day.

It stacks with other blessings.

Does not stack with other sculptures.

Up till now, the number of Grand Masterpiece complete : 2

Sculpting skill has improved.

Sculpture understanding skill has increased by 1.

Advance handicraft skill reached level 3. Efficiency of using any handicraft skill is increased by 8%. It will have various effects.

Fame increased by 40.

Because the statue was made out of basic materials such as rocks and trees, although it is an advanced statue, the amount of fame awarded was not large.

Art stat increase by 34

Fortitue increased by 9

Endurance increased by 4

All rights to the sculpture is given to Master Weed. If this sculpture is given life, it will be loyal to him.

For creating a masterpiece, all stats increase by 3

“HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!”

Weed burst into joyous laughter. Laughing at the summit of the Horom Mountains.

“Grand Masterpiece!”

Although he has yet to master Moonlight Sculpting, he could still be able to produce some great works. He felt really good after

completing the statue of his family.

It would only caused troubles if he gave life to all three of the statues.

When the 3 statues are given life, they would be hand in hand, and their efficiency level will decrease.

He has already decided not to give life to the statues. He will only give life to statues when they serve him purpose. He had only created this statue to commemorate the occasion.

'I've seen the sunset, sunrise, and many rain clouds passing by the mountains.'

*

Hwaryeong logged in earlier than usual and waited for the rest of the party. She had longed to see the view from the summit of the Horom Mountain.

“How will I get back? It'll also be hard to get back down.”

Hwaryeong climbed the mountain alone.

Soon, she was not far away from the place where the Avalanche occurred. Because she had experience of the climb, it was difficult to climb back up.

Hwaryeong reached the summit and found a statue that was not previously there.

“It’s beautiful!”

Hwaryeong couldn’t stop admiring it sincerely.

The statue stood still and quiet on the summit of Horom Mountains.

It seemed like warmth was wrapped its surroundings in the world's highest summit. To add to the mystery, there was a light surrounding it. It was no doubt that the light came from the Advanced Sculpting Effect.

The statues made from ordinary rocks showed off their beauty like gems.

“It’s awesome.”

Hwaryeong guessed that the person who created the sculptures was Weed.

"This is a genuine statue."

Besides the Pyramid and the statue of the Lion Monster, this was the one of the first statue she had seen made by Weed.

“What a marvelous sculpture.”

Hwaryeong slowly viewed the sculptures.

The grandma and younger sister statue was overflowing with liveliness.

“The guy is so handsome.”

Hwaryeong’s eyes shone as she saw the statue of the tall man.

Because she sees Celebrities considerably often, she appraised its appearance to be fairly passable. But of course, when she looked at the statue, she would imagine it to be Weed.

Chapter 9: Hall Of Fame Expedition

The guilds in the Central Continent were starting to use cutthroat information warfare.

They were looking up about the Scorpion King while also finding a way to lower the temperature around the continent.

Wizard or Sage, Nobles meet in the library presenting legend and myth from old books.

Then in the Barbarian's village a hint was found.

“In the continents North Edereun village disappeared. That in the village's altar a legend was passed down by the devoted saying that the heat would disappear. More contents from Edereun were reported in the investigation to me”

Edereun village disappeared!

Historical records states that it is located somewhere in the Kingdom of Kaldeath.

In the Northern parts of Kaldeath Kingdom, the land was literally frozen for a long period of time. Edereun and several other villages were not listed on the map.

“I already knew that.”

For the leaders of each guild, a goal appeared.

Go to the coldest part of the continent and seek the Edereun village!

If any other guild was able to solve the quest that led to the Crimson Wing Guild's collapse, they will be able to gain more prestige.

On top of that, they had other plans as well.

‘We take advantage of this opportunity, and can be the first pioneers of the north.’

The plentiful quests in the north. If you can obtain them and secure the hunting grounds, it would greatly increase the prestige of our guild.

‘There are many quests in the North. We can occupy the hunting grounds and expand the influence of our guild.’

‘A great opportunity to expand our guild!’

The guilds in the Central Continent have been fighting over the ownership of the land.

There are problems when occupying castles and fortresses, and even minor hunting grounds!

But you could change the balance of power by exploring the north.

Some guild leaders announced their guilds would go on an expedition to the North, without forcing those who don't want to go. It was a tolerable risk for their guild to venture to the North.

The Era of Pioneering the North is about to start.

*

The Dark Gamer's Tavern.

A number of high-level users were commissioned by the Crimson Wing Guild to participate in the failed quest. They were in recession for a while, but now they were active again.

Various guilds came to look for them to commission them on an expedition to the North.

Being a high-level user does not guarantee they will be an asset in battle. They should have experience and be able to exert the best of their abilities.

In any kind of battle, Dark Gamers knew how to use their

abilities to survive tenaciously. At the same time, they bring out a sense of responsibility and competitiveness from other guild recruits.

“Do as I say!. Don’t go to places you are not told to go to.”

Keuu. I thought it’d be ok.

“I died vain on a high level quest, and because of that people hate me.”

“Ok, I get it so stop.”

At the end of the day, Volk couldn’t bear listening to his wife.

Many others lost their lives following the Crimson Wing Guild on their A rank quest!

It was very bad venture for them, not only did they lost two levels, but they also lost skill proficiency.

The Dark Gamers Union had suffered significant damage to their reputation from the event.

However, as an excuse, Volk said.

“Regardless, we’ve made money from it. So far we’ve made a

total of 110,000 gold.”

“It’s not that much compared to the value of your life. It hurts me to think you’ve died.”

“You...!”

Volk’s eyes were filled with sudden emotions.

“I also feel the same way about you.”

“Sweetheart.”

Volk held her hands affectionately. A thought struck Darelyn and she asked.

“Surely, you didn’t lose any equipment, did you?”

“Of course not. I wore some cheap equipment purchased from a shop. The place seemed dangerous, so I took precautions.”

“You did well.”

Dark Gamers would always obtain additional equipment and wear them if they find they are likely to die during the quest. They only wear items that they wouldn't mind losing.

It was obvious that to a Dark Gamer, their equipment are treated as their second body.

Volk and Darelyn were resting, when a man approached them.

“I have a commission. Will you hear me out?”

Volk nodded at the man politely.

“We would listen. But once you tell us about it, we’ll decide whether or not to accept it.”

“Well of course. I come from the Cold Roses Guild. Our guild is taking this opportunity to explore the Northern Continent. The level requirements is 320 or higher. The salary is 40,000 gold.”

“The salary is rather generous.”

A man shouldn’t complain.

“Yes. The current fee for Dark Gamers have risen recently. If we find any important quests in the town of Edereun or any other town, additional money will be compensated.”

“I don’t mean to be disrespectful, but the Cold Roses Guild are able to lead an expedition without additional help, right?”

The Cold Roses guild was a mid-size guild who ranked in the top 40s in the middle continent. They owned 4 forts, but they were located in remote areas.

Furthermore, there was a kind-hearted Dwarven Warrior who was the head of the guild called Oberon, it was a decent middle-ranked guild.

Although Volk had his concerns, he accepted the man's request.

"Of course it's not just us. The guild's alliance, and some of the people of the general public are going as well. It is the first time that the Northern Continent is being explored, so we have to move faster and work faster than others to gather information."

"Then i guess there will be a large amount of people."

"That's right. We want to take this opportunity to explore the Northern towns and Kingdoms. In the North, there are still a lot of places left unexplored. Would you like to participate?"

Darelyn poked Volk in the side.

The conditions weren't all that bad.

Dark Gamers lived very prejudiced lives. In fact if they travelled alone, they will go to more dangerous areas.

To get there first, they had to venture ahead ambitiously and take lots of risks.

Pioneers of the Northern continent!

New hunting grounds and quests were not enough to satisfy their desire.

Volk and Darelyn accepted his request.

*

Weed and his group returned descending Horom mountain to the Dark Elves castle

They wanted to dispose of their japtem before climbing the Horom Mountains.

Surka listened cheerfully to the Dark Elves Granbell.

“You really were able to climb to the summit of Mount Horom, that is impressive. Let me tell you about a good hunting ground. Have you heard of Karaka forest?”

“I have not heard of it.”

“It is about a day's walk from here. There you will encounter

monsters of various levels. There is an abundance of monsters, a good place in many ways. And if you defeat the King Snake boss you'll be able to access an amazing place.”

“Amazing place?”

“You’ve heard of the Undead Legion?”

Granbell lowered her voice.

Granbell was not aware that Weed was Karichwi, after he transformed using Shapeshifter.

“The Undead Legion were very strong.”

Surka saw Weed’s eyes and replied. Weed associated with them and listened with interest.

Granbell started to boast.

"The Legions of Undead are strong, but not as strong as the Dark Elves. Talented in Elemental Magic and Archery! There are a lot of things the Dark Elves succeeded in!"

“Yes, of course.”

"Although the Legions of Undead caused a lot of chaos and

disappeared, the dungeons of the Lich Shire remain. Who knows what treasures the Lich Shire might have left inside."

"Treasure?"

"It is not for certain. But it's the type of things you would want to check out, is it not? Now the Dark Elven warriors are gathered at the entrance of the dungeon."

The hollow place where the Undead Legion emerged!

Granbell was talking about the place, in favor of a hunt.

The Rosenheim Kingdom Soldiers, Freya's Priests, Weed, and his party, headed into the forest of Karaka.

According to Granbell, various types of monsters appear randomly in the Yuroki Mountains. However, Weed recently became familiar with the types of monsters that could appear.

Weed travelled there with the Rosenheim Kingdom Soldiers and his companions to hunt if it only to raises just one level. Although the soldiers and his parties level differ slightly, it wasn't a big problem.

In any case, it was still a long way from being one of the strongest. He has leveled his production skills by contributing to the hunts with the soldiers.

But after a few days, Becker, Buren, and Hosram approached him.

“Commander, we have to go back to our hometown.”

"We are part of Rosenheim Kingdom. We cannot be absent in the army for too long."

No matter how high Weed's intimacy was, he could not hold soldiers belonging to the kingdom indefinitely. Now that we've completed the Legion of Undead quest, it was natural that they wanted return to their Kingdom.

The church of Freya was also missing its priests.

‘It's regretful that I cannot use my contribution points to retain them.’

Weed headed to the teleportation gate inside the cave in Plains of Despair with the Priests and Soldiers. His companions decided to continue hunting in Karaka forest.

“To Serabourg Castle.”

The teleportation gate was operated by the Priests.

The inside of the cave was suddenly covered by light, when it was

gone, nothing remained.

When Weed, the soldiers, and the priests teleported to Rosenheim Kingdom, they appeared near the central fountain. Where they inevitably became the center of people's attention.

"They appeared to be the Kingdom's Soldiers. The Royal Knights."

"Where did those people come from?"

"They're Priests of Freya."

"What quest were they doing?"

Weed caught the attention of the people, fortunately, troublesome things did not occur.

The Royal Knights and Guards immediately came out.

"His Majesty is waiting for you."

Under the guidance of the Knights, Weed headed inside the Palace. He was to once again meet with the King in his Royal Court.

The old King of Rosenheim Kingdom has passed away. A new

King has been crowned. The King's first son. Archduke Winston has taken his place.

“You are the Sculptor, Weed, who built the tomb for His Majesty, the late King.”

King Winston's eyes were very sharp. There were many Nobles and Knights inside the Royal Court. King Winston's evaluation was belligerent. Because of their nemesis, the Kingdom of Brent, He planned on enriching and strengthening the Kingdom's army.

In fact, those intentions were already implied on several occasions. Weed had collected data from the Dark Gamers Union. Weed had tried to read all he could about the newly appointed King of Rosenheim.

Weed kneeled on one knee.

“Yes. Your Majesty.”

"We heard from sources that you borrowed a few of the Kingdom's soldiers and Royal Knights. Is that correct?"

“It is so, Your Majesty.”

"However, they our soldiers were gone for a long period of time. What business did you have to conclude to take Soldiers and Royal Knights outside of their Kingdom?"

King Winston looked down at Weed's eyes.

The King was known to have the best military strength. He has special interest in monster subjugation to expand the frontiers. But on Sculptor's appeal, they were forced to retreat from the enemy.

The judgement of King Winston did not end there.

‘I too see that.’

However, Weed was familiar, inhospitality, life suffering, and sorrow. But now he knew how to be more proactive to reverse the situation.

Weed stood up on the spot and said.

"It was honorable for His Majesty's soldiers to fight against the Legions of Undead that might have done harm to the Kingdom of Rosenheim."

After Weed had spoken, he tried to leave. This was all part of a plan.

It is the law to deliberately say something interesting, and then disappear. Once they have gained interest, they will be more willing to listen.

King Winston asked.

“What has happened.”

"It wasn't that much of a big deal. We only prevented the Undead Legion and Lich Shire from doing harm to the continent."

"Did such a thing really happened? Let me hear more of the details."

Weed told the story of how he brought the Soldiers of Rosenheim Kingdom to the front lines and fought with the Legions of Undead.

He also mentioned vividly how the soldiers did outstanding job of fighting without neglecting their lives.

But the truth was, it was the Orcs and the Dark elves who were the main source of power to fight the Undead Legions.

The Rosenheim Kingdom's Soldiers were also present listening to everything Weed was saying.

Weed praised the Rosenheim Kingdom's Royal Knights and Soldiers for efforts, and they said thanks.

It is necessary to have intimacy with the King and his courts, even more so than villagers. Because of the story of how the soldiers fought, Weed was able to raise his familiarity with King

Winston.

King Winston's assessment of Weed was also altered.

“You know, I also had many great adventures.”

“No, your majesty.”

"I also like people who enjoy challenges and adventure. It's been a long time since I've had a companion with similar interest to chat with. Would you like to work with the Royal Family of Rosenheim?"

Ttiring!

You have received a job offer from the King Winston.

The Kingdom's Sculptor.

If you work for the Royal Courts, you get to live with the Royal Family, and meet any Nobles and people of Royal Blood.

300 Soldiers will be put under your command.

The Royal Family will provide you with a private room.

You can receive training from Royal Knights, and you will a

monthly salary of 2000 gold minimum.

You will receive additional salary every time you create a sculpture.

While hired as a Royal Sculptor, all sculptures made during that period will be property of the Royal Family.

Would you like to accept this job?

Employment as a Royal Sculptor.

If he can meet Royals and Nobles, quests are much easier to obtain. It is easier to raise his reputation with men under his command.

If you gained enough reputation, you may receive a town or a castle.

For the sake Kingdom, one would need to contribute large amount of money, rather than building up reputation or public value.

However, without losing his courtesy, Weed said.

“I am sorry, your Majesty.”

“Why the expression.”

“My skills are still insufficient to be the Royal Sculptor, and I would like to have more adventures.

A royal sculptor could get more quests from Nobles and Royalty. But the number and type of commissions is usually limited. But the variety of quest are limited to creating sculptures.

In such quests, he can improve his sculpting skills abundantly. But, wandering freely and independently is precisely the shortcut to improving Sculpting.

“If that’s so, then it cannot be helped. If you ever change your mind, come find us and We’ll be happy to entrust the job to you”

“Yes, Your Majesty. Also unfortunately the Centurion Dale was killed in the midst of chaos. Although he will not be returning, along with other soldiers, it was all thanks to their sacrifice that we were able to become victorious. He will remain as one of the bravest Soldiers in the history of Rosenheim Kingdom.”

“We are also saddened by Centurion Dale’s death. But because of this event, other Soldiers are stronger, and the Kingdom and her residents are safe. Adventurer Weed, Rosenheim Kingdom will not forget what you have done for us.”

Rosenheim Kingdom's Royal Knights and Soldiers have been returned.

Due of the growth of the borrowed Soldiers, you have earned 3705 Royal Contribution points.

With this Weed's work at the Royal Court was mostly finished.

'Contribution points have been returned after leveling them up'

Weed came out of the Palace and headed towards to the Church of Freya. The guards no longer stop him.

Weed was able to meet with the High Priest Immediately.

"Congratulation to defeating the Legions of Undead."

The greeted Weed in reverence, because there was no one who had higher contribution to the Freya's Church.

At least in Rosenheim kingdom, there was nobody with more fame than Weed.

Weed took out the Helaine's Grail from his coat.

"I'm here to return the Church's Relic."

“It has been received. And please go to Somreun Liberty City sometime soon, the High Priest is expecting you.”

“I will go when I have the time.”

In reality, he regretted returning Helaine's Grail because it provided infinite amount of Holy Water. However, the item must be used with discretion.

If you use holy water from Helaine's Grail for personal gain, you will lose Faith. His Faith had dropped 4 times from drinking Holy Water.

‘Then I am done with the errand from Freya's church’

After returning the Helaine's Grail to the church, Weed stood in front of the teleportation gate.

The next destination was the City of Artists, Rhodium.

On the Versailles Continent, it's the place where culture blooms like a brilliant flower.

The city is the birthplace of the Production and Art profession.

Weed imagined.

‘Talent artist don’t need to hone and polish their skills. Musicians flooded the streets, giving great performances.’

Sounds of beautiful music, discussions of art throughout the city, and a brilliantly illuminated night sky.

Weed imagined Rhodium.

“Travel to Rhodium.”

The Freya priests operated the teleportation gate and Weed was engulfed in an instant.

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Rhodium’s Central Square!

Weed appeared under a light, and a crowd formed around him immediately.

“A person!”

“Someone came here through the teleport!”

In a very desperate and urgent voice.

Weed quickly looked around.

Many people appeared to be gathered in the square.

‘Did something happen in the city?’

Weed began to observe the situation.

People in the square began to rush towards Weed.

Their reaction was comparable to when he appeared in the center of Serabourg in Rosenheim Kingdom with Soldiers and Priests of the Orders of Freya.

Everyone in the crowd came running towards of Weed, with heads bowed.

And at the same time they quickly held out their hands.

“Please help.”

“Please spare some coin!”

“I'm really hungry, Keuheuk! Mister help a starving friend out.”

Rhodium, the City of Artists!

It was the poorest town riddled with beggars everywhere.

“Please give me money.”

“Only 10 coppers and you could be the savior of my life.”

"People once lent a helping hand!"

“I won’t ask for a lot. Only enough to buy some bread to feed myself.”

Weed was surrounded by approximately 1000 people asking for money.

At the same time, new people appeared through the teleportation gates. Weed swiftly escaped.

The beggars approached the newly emerged travellers, and bowed their head until it almost touched the ground.

“Just 1 copper. Please. Please help me out a little, we’re living in a harsh world. Help a poor man just this once.”

It was as if they haven’t seen the light for one year!

Pathetic tears come out with gloomy disposition!

They were struggling from hunger as they begged!

Book 08: Classical Concert

Chapter 1: Rhodium

Rhodium, the City of Artists, was filled to the brim with beggars. Masses of people asking for alms were found all the way from the gates to the plaza.

"Please, spare just one coin! Ah, have you chosen what paint color to use yet?"

"Well, I wanted to create a new shade of my own, but as you know, the price of paint isn't cheap."

"Right, it's hard to use as many colours of paint as you are right now."

"I may have to stick to using the basic primary colors."

Impoverished art critics! This is a common sight anywhere in Rhodium. But, right now, these panhandlers were extremely jealous. The reason being a user named Weed, a beggar who had recently appeared from a Teleport Gate. At first, they had crowded him so that they could beg him for money. Now, however, they were amazed by his skill in supplication.

"Haaaa..."

Weed gazed at the sky with an expression of utter devastation ... He was still wearing Yeti fur clothes in this hot weather! Crowds of

people passed by this part of the plaza.

"....."

Weed just stared at the sky with a gloomy expression. Despair, lamentation, pain, frustration, regret! Showing all these emotions on his face, just sitting there. Clink!

"Cheer up."

"Perhaps a better day will come."

"I don't know what happened to you... but life isn't as hopeless as you think."

"Please, buy some clothes with this... that fur looks so uncomfortable."

Weed didn't say a word. Passing adventurers simply used their own imagination.

"He must have suffered a terrible fate."

"How can he stare at the sky so mournfully?"

"My heart bleeds, just by seeing him..."

And so, they tossed their coins.

His skill was enough to attract donations through sympathy alone! However, if they knew what was actually on Weed's mind, they would have cried out in frustration instead.

"How could I be accepted into a college?! Now I'll have to pay expensive tuition fees for classes! And, in addition, I'll have to buy all those pricey textbooks. It can't be true ... What must not have happened ..."

He was devastated about something that everyone else would be envious of: Getting into college. Even the other artists couldn't truly stay jealous of him, since he looked so miserable.

"Hey, a young one like you shouldn't be so dejected."

Weed only sighed.

Pavo clicked his tongue, saying, "Cheer up, it's a big world out there ... Were you dumped by a girl?"

Weed just shook his head. He couldn't bear to say that he had passed an entrance exam. To him, it was such a tragedy, just the simple mention of it would make him burst into tears.

Gaston and Pavo couldn't have imagined that it was merely this that made him seem to be in such terrible despair.

"You shouldn't be so discouraged. No matter how dire the situation seems..." Pavo said, as he took a step towards him.

Pavo was now close enough to reach for the stack of coins in front of Weed.

Sweep!

Weed collected the coins in the blink of an eye as he maintained a pained expression. The movement was so fast that it would have been missed by anyone, even if they had watched him closely. No matter how sad he was, he wouldn't forget his attachment to money.

"Lacking cash as I am, I had better grab all the change I can."

There was one gold coin, several silver ones, and many copper pennies. However, those totaled a whopping one gold and forty silvers... pretty nice for just being small change.

It wasn't that much to Weed, but it was a motherload to the artists in Rhodium. Pavo came closer and patted Weed's shoulder.

"Haha, were you that needy? But, say, are you planning to sit here without eating anything?"

Of course, Weed didn't want to do that. It was just that he was

stuck in the midst of beggars. Then again, he was rather hungry.

"I know a good diner just around the corner. Wanna join me?"

"How much is a meal?" Weed asked, sharply.

"You can get a decent meal for around twenty coppers."

Twenty coppers would buy almost seven loaves of wheat bread, but a proper meal raised satiation more.

"I guess it would be okay."

As if he'd finished what he came here for, Weed rose to his feet.

"Then, let's go and have a look at that diner."

When he had first arrived through the Teleport Gate, loads of beggars had crowded him. Luckily he managed to ward them off at the time. Now those panhandlers didn't bat an eye as Weed left the plaza. Actually, they were pretty happy to be rid of the competition, if only for a while.

"I didn't lose any money to those guys... I even earned a little more than a whole gold coin."

He had managed to protect his money, even though he could

have just tossed a few coins in the first place to do so. But he was proud and satisfied! No artist should ever bother to beg from Weed!

"There is a good, cheap diner this way. Just follow me, and I'll show you where to get some nice food."

Gaston and Pavo dragged Weed through the convoluted alleys. They had gone quite far from the plaza.

"This place might actually be good..."

Normally, stores in deep alleys sell cheaper and tastier meals than ones near main roads. Only people in the know can find these places, hidden like treasure. In layman's terms: Exclusive native diners!

Weed sat down with Gaston and Pavo to have a meal. Cheap as it was, the menu only included a simple soup, some salad, and a loaf of bread. It was made with good quality grain though, so it was soft and savory.

"Delicious!"

Weed ate his food with satisfaction. He could bake his own bread, of course, but it would require a lot of materials and time. His money was well spent on bread this good. Pavo smiled brightly.

"Isn't it? Few places would sell this as cheaply."

It was a valid point; even Weed agreed. That would explain why the diner was so crowded, even though it was hidden this deep inside the alleys. The bowl was virtually clean once Weed was finished.

"Thanks for showing me this, it was a very nice meal."

"What are your plans?" Pavo asked, interested.

"I'm going to have a look around in the city."

"You don't exactly look like a tourist to me..."

Many tourists come to Rhodium, since it had become a trend to tour the castles and cities of the continent. Though, tourists usually didn't start begging as soon as they arrived.

"I wished to inquire about skills relating to my job."

"Then your profession is...?"

"A sculptor."

"Ah, you chose a tough one."

Gaston and Pavo looked at Weed with sympathy. They also

understood why he begged so fervently now. If he came here not as a traveller, but as a sculptor, he surely had a hard time wherever he went.

Gaston said, "Among art-based classes, the more basic types, like sculptors, tend to be the most difficult. You need a skillful hand, and can't even make art as you wish. Even in the city of Rhodium, few have chosen an artistic class; production classes are much more common. Though... I have heard rumours that there's actually a world-renowned sculptor somewhere in Royal Road."

"World-renowned sculptor?"

"Someone who has, with passion and persistence, overcome a class that everyone else dismissed."

"Wow. It's amazing that there's such a person. Do you think I would be able to meet him here in Rhodium?"

"They say he's in Rosenheim Kingdom. He even made a pyramid and the Sphinx; something no ordinary sculptor would even have imagined! They even say that some of his other works are hidden around the continent. Some pieces thought to be his work are also found in the sky city, Lavias. The rumours say that his sculpting skill is at least Intermediate Level 7, and that you can get enormous buffs from looking at any of his works."

""

Weed was very surprised that stories about him were this widespread. He knew that he was well-known as the adventurer Weed, but he hadn't thought that he was this famous as the sculptor Weed.

"Makes sense though, since it would be artists that like this side of me."

Weed stood from his seat.

"Are you going now?"

"Yes."

"Then, we'll see you around. Perhaps once you level up some more, you can buy some paintings... or I might help you with a house..."

Gaston and Pavo waved good-bye.

*

Rhodium, the City of Artists.

There was poverty everywhere, but the city itself was beautiful and romantic.

It was filled with wondrous architecture that complemented the surroundings, with streets that were littered with detailed art, and even the little things spread here and there were stupendous.

The whole place was filled with fancy lights and colors.

Each road had young aspiring artists, either painting or sculpting. Others were playing instruments, often performing on the spot.

Crowds of travellers visited, and even more artists strove for their dreams in this city.

Indeed, it was built majestically. However, due to lack of funds the city wasn't properly maintained and therefore easily deteriorated. Understandably, Rhodium was also known as the city without a lord -- since no one was interested in taking it over!

While the continent had plenty of lords engaging in brutal struggles over castles and territories, Rhodium seemed almost too peaceful.

The lifeblood of any city is, of course, money. Funding is needed to populate, irrigate, research, and trade.

However, weapons and armor didn't sell very well in Rhodium.

The place was nearly deserted of adventurers, because the nearby hunting grounds were just mediocre.

No person in their right mind would want to own such an unprofitable city.

"Well, art won't bring in any profits..."

Weed's convictions were strengthened in this moment.

Blacksmiths, weavers, and enchanters usually complained about how tough their classes were, but to Weed they sounded a hundred times easier than any artisan class.

Weed continued his slow tour of Rhodium.

"O, you are my sunlight, my blessing, my lover!

To be with you forever!"

He could hear some young bards singing at a nearby theatre.

There were many bards in Rhodium.

They could improve both the strength and morale of their parties while hunting, and could also earn extra cash by giving performances.

In short, just the fact that they didn't have to beg was an

advantage. This was a class that could earn its keep wherever it went!

Because of these traits, the Bard was the most respected class in Rhodium.

The second place would be Jewelers. Jewelers are able to manufacture various precious metals into beautiful accessories.

Sculptors could also refine gemstones once they reached a certain skill level, but they couldn't compare to the real specialists.

Jewelers could refine gold, silver, pearls, jade, emeralds, sapphires, and more to raise their worth.

The Jeweler class could be considered a more specialized type of sculptor.

"This is truly the City of Artists."

Weed appreciated many artworks as he walked around in Rhodium.

There were the production guilds and artistic guilds, who were very rare in other cities.

Of course, there were also a few basic combat guilds here and there.

In Rhodium, there were more than three hundred guilds! This was only possible, since there was of all kinds of combat, production and artistic guilds.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that nearly all existing classes could be found here.

Weed stopped at a street lined with guilds.

"This would be a good time to look for more clues."

He had been told that there would be more hints about moonlight sculpting to be found in the artist guilds.

Thus, it was necessary to become friendly with the residents and guild masters.

Flattery and praise to steal a target's heart and relentless criticism to make him look like a lifelong friend!

This task wasn't all that difficult for Weed who possessed these smooth-talking skills.

"There is something else I need to do first... It would be good to learn a few skills now that I'm here."

Before touring the artistic guilds, Weed entered the nearby

warriors' guild.

*

Even though Rhodium was an artistic city, it didn't mean that there were no users with combat-related classes.

Bramas was a warrior who strangely enough had chosen to start in Rhodium.

Being someone who loved to travel, he was attracted to the history and culture of Rhodium.

At first, that choice had been fine, as there was plenty of prey in the surroundings!

While the artists were busy trying to raise their skill levels, Bramas easily found mobs to hunt right outside the walls.

Normally in starting cities, there would be an extreme lack of rabbits and foxes which created fierce competition among hunters.

However, since there was an abundant wildlife to hunt around Rhodium, Bramas had quickly leveled up.

He even developed a strong companionship with the few other combat classes, as they fought along each other.

"There are no warriors in Rhodium stronger than I!"

Bramas had started to take pride in being the best warrior in Rhodium. While he was practising a new skill in the warrior's guild, someone approached him.

"Oh! Are you a warrior visiting Rhodium?"

Warriors had great compatibility with each other. Since they could cover each other in tough battles, it was a good idea to have more than one in a party.

Weed, who had just entered the guild, shook his head.

"Sorry, but I am no warrior."

"Then, what are you in our guild for?"

"I'm here to learn a skill. If you have no business with me, please excuse me."

Weed walked past Bramas and entered the guild's training center.

"What is he trying to do here?"

Curious, Bramas followed him. Weed had stopped in front of the center's instructor.

Curtly, the instructor asked, "What business have brought you here?"

Simple and dutiful warriors generally tended to dislike artists.

The instructor treated Weed with disdain, because he saw that Weed possessed the "displeasing" temperament of an artist.

Weed silently unequipped his Yeti clothes and put them away. With the continent as hot as it was, he didn't require any leather clothing. He even unequipped the armor covering his torso.

"Please, strike me."

"What?"

"To protect my peers, I wish to test my will."

Bramas went goggle-eyed. Aren't those the promised words for warriors learning new skills?!

"It's definitely in order to gain a warriors' skill -- what is going on?"

The instructor brandished his club.

"A feeble artist dares to make such an arrogant statement!? I will make you regret those words!"

The instructor forcefully swung his club towards Weed's torso.

WHAM

A terrifyingly powerful blow!

However, Weed didn't move an inch.

"Looks like that wasn't enough. Then I shall strike again."

WHAAM!

But Weed's expression still didn't change at all.

"Perhaps I have seriously underestimated you ..."

The instructor showed a little more respect, and held his club even tighter. The veins popping out from his arm were visible.

"If it gets too painful, let me know. You could die, even if you force yourself to endure it."

"I am fine."

"Then I shall continue."

POW BAMM BAMM BAMM

The instructor struck, each blow more powerful than the last. But Weed still calmly took the hits. The instructor's breathing became more and more labored, and in the end the club snapped in two.

"Haaaaaa ... Haaaaaaa You ... are incredible!"

The instructor was out of breath.

"Have you ever tried closing your eyes when you took a hit? This a whispered secret, but they say that the pain dulls when your eyes are closed. This method lets you endure even more rigorous beatings."

Ding!

New Stat: You have gained the Toughness stat!

TOUGHNESS:The ability to endure blows.

The more hits a body has survived, the stronger the hits it can resist becomes. Unlike Fortitude, which grows as you repeat a task, this stat is only increased by being hit, and contributes to

increasing your maximum life.

SKILL: You have learned Eyes Closed Tight.

EYES CLOSED TIGHT LVL 1 (0%):

Closing your eyes as you are attacked minimizes the damage taken. For each level in this skill an additional 3% of Damage and Pain is decreased. However, caution with this skill is advised, as unwise usage of this skill in combat may expose you to even greater danger.

A new stat and skill!

But closing your eyes was a very dangerous action.

To close your eyes as an opponent's weapon closes in... it's a newbie's mistake, but in this case it's done to distribute damage, and in order to do this better, it is necessary to shut your eyes at the right moment.

This requirement might actually end up exposing a player to following attacks, and cause an inability to counterattack, or leave the player's weak points vulnerable.

Weed re-equipped his armor.

"Thank you for teaching me. I truly respect the warrior class since a warrior is able to protect their friends and fight their enemies at the frontline. I will do my best to become such a dependable man and might return once the chance comes around."

"It was an honor to teach such a great man who is able to defend the ones dear to him. Please come again anytime you want."

After bowing towards the instructor, Weed stepped towards the exit.

At this point, Bramas went slack-jawed.

"No way!"

The skill Weed had just learned required a whopping four hundred Fortitude.

Thus, it was a skill even Bramas hadn't learned yet... Fortitude wasn't an easy stat to raise in the first place. It only increased when a player consistently took severe damage from monsters, or falling into grave danger. But how often will a player actually let himself get hit by monsters?!

"No one in their right mind would fight those kinds of dangerous battles."

Usually, warriors hunt in a party instead of travelling alone.

Therefore, there aren't really that many occasions to get hit. While the warrior may take a blow or two from monsters, the fighters of a party always return at least three or four for each taken.

They can hunt monsters with less damage. So, even if a player has a high level, usually their Fortitude stat won't be very high.

On top of this, Fortitude only rise in situations driving players to their limits... for instance when a monster deals severe damage, because the strength of it's attack overpowers one's defense!

Fortitude is only easily increased when one's life is near empty.

Toughness only demands for players to take many hits, but Fortitude is true to its name in that one has to truly endure to increase it.

To get such a stat to a high level, a player would need stunning combat awareness to preserve their life until the critical point and still deliberately permit multiple hits.

But, in such a situation, a direct hit could mean instant death!

A monster's attack power isn't fixed. A direct hit causes a lot of damage, while a grazing blow only causes little.

A player would have to tolerate those blows and precisely monitor his health.

Considering that most common warriors cannot break past the two hundred and fifty mark in Fortitude, this situation suddenly seemed ridiculous.

Flabbergasted, Bramas really had to ask: "Just what kind of class are you?!"

Weed answered, "A sculptor."

"....." Bramas was at a loss for words.

*

The Frozen Rose Guild used every possible means to try and rally people.

"Come on! We still need more people to join our expedition!"

"No way... we don't know what kind of danger is waiting for us out there."

The users in the Frozen Rose Guild and their allies announced their participation in the expedition.

A total of four hundred high-level users, and an additional thirty more Dark Gamers joining on the day of departure!

For only being a mid-sized guild, this was an incredible effort.

Since they were tired of constant clashing on the central continent, they had decided to invest heavily in exploration of the north.

Even so, Oberon the guild master of Frozen Rose felt as if something was missing.

"It's better to start exploring the north before others do, but there's no need for any futile sacrifices."

While there were already adventuring parties making their way north, this was the first time a guild were attempting this as well. It also put the guild's fate on the line.

Oberon wanted to be fully prepared.

"We shall only recruit the best of each field."

The primary adventuring classes, assassins, thieves, cartographers, rangers, and other exploration classes had already hired. However, there were still many other roles needing to be filled.

"Clerics! We need someone to cure our injuries and afflictions. We also need cooks for meals, and at least three blacksmiths for repairs. A few merchants for logistics would be a good idea too."

Since it was a guild-wide, large-scale exploration, there was still much to do.

There was no time for slacking off, since no one knew what dangers and adventures would be waiting in the northern towns and castles.

Other guilds probably had probably been delayed due to having similar thoughts.

Leading a guild to explore the north was indeed a huge risk.

Until the expedition was ready for departure, Oberon and the rest of the Frozen Rose Guild would be busy collecting members.

While they were working on finding valuable men for the expedition, Drum, the guild's chief mage, called out.

"Commander Oberon."

"Yes, what is it?"

"Why don't we recruit a few people from Rhodium?"

"The City of Artists? Why from there?" Oberon asked quizzically.

There weren't any warriors or adventurers of notice in Rhodium.

As the rumors about the northern expedition spread, a tidal wave of requests to join from all over had been flooding in!

Sure, have a larger force would be nice too, but it wouldn't do to admit just anyone.

Only famous and very skilled users were allowed in.

"Rhodium is full of classes related to crafts and arts, right?"

"That's right"

"Perhaps we can make use of their specialities... if we were to encounter a storm during our adventure, the expedition would quickly tire. With an architect around, wouldn't we be able to build a shelter to rest in?"

Drum brought up a valid point.

"That sounds like a nice idea. Add in some architects - why didn't I think of that?"

When Oberon showed his approval, Drum continued with increased confidence.

"While Bards aren't explicitly useful, they can wash away the fatigue of travel by playing their instruments. Dancers can also play a similar role. When a certain number plays as a group, their performance will become even more effective."

Though the stat bonuses from bards only totalled about 10%, the cumulated effect of using it on hundreds of people made it impossible to ignore. If dancers and other similar classes joined in, it would grant a significant increase in the expedition's fighting power.

Bards and dancers were not well-accepted in standard sieges though.

Their low vitality made them easy targets for skilled assassins in the early stages of a war.

This was a critical flaw for most of those classes!

When a performer dies during a song or dance, the boosted stats is not only reversed to normal, they're even decreased.

This was why these classes weren't of much use for sieges.

They might still prove essential for large-scale explorations though.

Oberon stroked his chin, mumbling, "This really is an intriguing suggestion..."

"That's right, commander, and it may be nice to have a few types of artists as well. While they may not have an immediate effect, they will definitely bring some kind of buffs to the group. We should bring as many people who may increase our chance of success as possible."

"Alright. We have to pass Rhodium as we head north anyway, so we'll use the occasion to recruit some more people."

*

After learning a skill from the Warrior Guild, Weed headed towards the guilds related to production and arts.

"Firstly, I should investigate the places most likely to be related to my goal."

He was going to start his search head on. The hints for moonlight sculpting should be somewhere nearby.

First, Weed visited the Sculptors' Guild. Lots of people were entering and leaving the building.

"That'll be a good place to start looking."

However, as Weed tried to enter,, the guards crossed their spears and barred his path.

"You may not enter our guild unless you are an artist of Rhodium. If you wish to pass, go and register as one first and return."

"How do I register as an artist?"

"Go to the Artists' Union. The Union is on the left at the end of this street"

With no other choice, Weed had to go and visit the Artist's Union. The Union was a grandly built three-story building.

"Extravagantly fancy despite being dead broke..."

Weed opened the door and entered. There were five middle-aged men handling the usual office work.

"We haven't had a visitor in a long time. How may I help you?"

"I wish to register as an artist."

The elder laughed heartily at this.

"Anyone from Rhodium wouldn't need to register separately, so you must of course be from some other kingdom. Where are you from?"

"I came from the Rosenheim Kingdom."

"Hmm... That's quite far away. Surprising that artistry has spread all the way over there. Then I shall first introduce to our city Rhodium. Rhodium is the City of Art and Culture! By all means, any person seeking a meaningful life must live alongside art. Barren, dry emotion causes an impoverished lifestyle. In our Rhodium, there are countless pieces of art; each preserving great beauty and vintage style."

Weed nodded in agreement; he had seen that for himself.

Each piece decorating the streets and houses of Rhodium were crafted with a very devoted effort. Since even the common streets had art of that class, it was plausible that there were even better pieces inside residences or galleries.

Weed had actually visited the Palace of Rosenheim, but even there he hadn't see artistry of this level. With all this art, the city definitely deserved the title of "An Artist's Heaven". On top of this, Rhodium was overflowing with requests for art that anyone with decent talent could easily accept.

The elder continued his seemingly endless boasting over Rhodium.

"Have you seen the sights of Rhodium during sunset? It is an absolutely breathtaking scene! Many tourists come to Rhodium for that sight alone. Art is the lifeblood of any rich soul! Once again, I welcome you to the city of art, Rhodium."

However, Weed wasn't the least bit inspired. There were more beggars than artworks! If he had not seen those unfortunate people, the elder's speech might have moved him a little, but now it was too late.

Rhodium, a city with so little profit that no one wanted to claim it! It was definitely way out of Weed's interests. The only redeeming quality it had was that artwork was traded in bulk here.

That made it easy for Weed to sell all those mini-sculptures he had piled up for a bit of profit.

There were even a multitude of quests related to artists.

Since there was such a rich culture in spite of the lack of commercial development, there were still many such requests. This fact alone was what kept the artists from leaving Rhodium.

"I wish to know how I can register as an artist of this wonderful city of Rhodium."

"Mmhmm, that is something you should know. For a foreigner to register as an artist, one only needs to show a specific qualification."

"What do I need to do?"

"Make art. Any road, wallside, or place in Rhodium is fine. Just make some kind of artwork in a spot. Should you create art that shows your passion for Rhodium, we will welcome you with open arms. Since you are a sculptor, you will have to carve a sculpture."

Ding!

Artist of RhodiumSculptors prove their effort and passion through their works.

If you wish to gain the right for activity within Rhodium, create your own piece.

DIFFICULTY:

Undefined

QUEST CONSTRAINTS:

You must create a piece fitting of your talent. Should you

dishonor yourself, you may lose a significant amount of fame and be restricted within Rhodium.

So, to get registered as a Rhodian artist, he needed to carve a sculpture that accurately represented his talent. That explained why there were carvings everywhere! As this point, making any old sculpture was a piece of cake for Weed. But to make one fitting of his skill, he needed to make either a Grand artwork or a Masterpiece.

"I shall make a fitting sculpture."

You have accepted the quest.

*

When Mapan first arrived at the Yuroki Mountain Range, he couldn't really find much to do. It really was difficult for merchants to settle their businesses in unknown territories. Mapan, however, adapted pretty quickly.

"There is no such thing as a place in the world where you can't earn money!"

An indisguisable greed for money! The adaptability Weed had seeded in him activated.

"I can trade, simply traveling from town to town, buying and selling."

There were plenty of towns in Yuroki, either comprised of Orcs, Dark Elves, or the Exiles in the plains. Mapan started a trading route between all these towns with a wagon filled with goods.

"Alright, buying items -- anything from animal skins to japtem from your hunts!"

First, he bought all the japtem he could get his hands on in the Exiles' towns. Those items, traps and camping equipment such as rope, were cheap and plentiful. He purchased enough items from the Exiles to fill five wagons, and moved on to the Dark Elves' settlements.

While not as skilled as Dwarves, the Dark Elves still had a rather high skill in handicraft. Much of their crafted equipment and tools were durable and reliable.

Mapan bought as much as he could here as well.

After selling the skins from the Exiles' towns, he spent all the money on buying more items.

Then he travelled to the Orc settlements. First to the town of the orc lord Bulchwi. After the Orc Race quest had been cleared, new users was appearing in great numbers in Yuroki.

"I'm an Orc. Chwichwit!"

"Any real Orc should be able to nasalize. Chwiiik! Mimic me everyone."

"Oppa, you're so charismatic! Chwichwichwit!"

"Eww, you're spraying spittle. Chwichwit!"

There were a horde of Orcs wearing the orc starting gear.

These people were charmed by the Orc race after watching Karrichwi on the Hall of Fame.

Overwhelming numbers! Quantity over quality! Orcs, the incredibly reproductive lords of Yuroki!

Those who dreamed of adventuring with the strong, charismatic, and violent Orcs chose this as their race. Even the shoddy east gate of the town was crowded with more than a thousand Orcs!

If you added to this the Orcs that hadn't passed the newbie four weeks in Versailles Continent's time, it would total an astronomical amount of them!

"Let's hunt! Chwik!"

"It's a monster haven. Chwichwichwit!"

"Chwikchwik! Lots of things to beat up."

These people formed parties of three to five, scattering out of town in order to pummel wolves.

They held bulky clubs and even large broken branches as weapons.

Since branches had shoddy durability and miniscule attack power at best, newbies from not only the central kingdoms, but also from the Rosenheim Kingdom, altogether ignored them as weapons.

SMASH

The female Orc user, Erchwi, pummeled the head of a wolf with a branch. It wasn't a weak hit at all.

"Nice hit, Erchwi. Chwiik!"

"Such overwhelming power, Oppa. Chwichwichwit!"

While humans have trouble hunting even the feebler rabbits and foxes, these newbies were effortlessly beating up wolves.

Orcs don't have to fight as controlled as humans.

They can take most attacks with their natural thick-skinned defense even without protective gear. Add that to their natural strength!

They could even freely use heavy weapons normally unusable to humans, so their fights were very easy.

Take one hit, then give back a hit - only, their reciprocated hits were extremely powerful.

"From the Yuroki Mountain Range... Chwichwichwichi! I am an Orc!"

"Orc! Orc! Orc!"

"Puchwiik! Puchwichwit! Kill them all!"

Massive, burly Orcs ran amok, stomping and clubbing wolves on sight. This was the splendor of the Orcs, and proof of their incredibly fast precocious growth.

Meanwhile, Mapan began his business in this Orc settlement.

"Come one, come all for adventuring tools! Essential bandages to dress those wounds, and bags to carry all your items! There's even some simple weaponry -- top quality, made by Dark Elves. You must be tired of all that mundane Orc cooking! Don't you miss the taste of salt? I have all sorts of spices used by Dark Elves."

"Chwichwichwik!"

"I'll pay all my money. Chwichwik! Please sell me one of those weapons."

The Orcs had to line up to buy even one thing. Sure, Orc settlements were fine in all other fields, but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that their shops were the baddest there were.

Since even a rusty glaive cost more than a hundred thousand gold, there was no affordable weapons to buy and use. Then, as if some kind of god had manifested on Earth, Mapan appeared with wagons filled with goods. Not only were they in high demand, he had a monopoly as well!

"Step right up and wait in line; there's plenty of stock!"

Mapan was more than happy to sell all the goods he had bought. The lowest price was two or three times the original cost, and weapons were even sold at ten times the original cost!

Others might criticize his actions as bordering extortion, but Mapan had been taught something important by Weed: "It's not a rip-off if your customers are happy."

Usually, the profits from newbie items were minimal, but it was a completely different story if they were sold this skillfully. It might have been nice with a little more, but the profits were

enough to fatten Mapan's pockets. Above all, the fact that he didn't have to wait very long for it to sell was a huge advantage.

As he watched the Orcs cheer as they make their purchases, he felt a certain satisfaction as a merchant.

"Chwichwik!"

However, Mapan's faint heart was tested every time an Orc's face got too close.

"Gaahhh!"

The atrociously ugly Orc Karrichwi! His vestige was evidently present here. The users who selected the Orc species after being charmed by Karrichwi's quest usually changed their appearance slightly. Except, they always changed it for the worse!

"A knife scar on the face, please."

"I'll be fine, even with an eyepatch."

"Make the teeth as large as possible, and have them stick out of the mouth a lot as well."

"Make it easy to spit a lot while talking..."

"A nose that takes up half the face!"

Orcs don't even have a plain appearance in the first place!

There was always at least an eyepatch or a scar on their faces. Adding to this all the personal "tastes", the resulting sights were the stuff of nightmares.

Nevertheless, Mapan ended up making a killing on his sales and rapidly built up his fame.

Mapan, the Merchant of the Orcs! Virtually every Orc user knew the name of Mapan.

"Orcs tend to grow blazingly fast, though it slows a bit after the initial stages to mid-game."

Orcs had feeble magic and handicraft. They have no idea how to disarm traps, and lacked the power of faith. There were Orc Shamans and Warlocks, but they specialized in buffing fighting power, rather than restoring health.

"Orcs -- weak mentally but amazing physically. If these people mature, so will my profits... Establishing a monopoly without a single competitor! This is the dream of any merchant."

Mapan continued trading with high hopes. After selling all his goods, he bought japtem from the Orc users.

"Hey! Buying anything and everything! Buying all kinds of japtem."

"Over here! Chwichwit!"

"Chwiik! Buy mine too."

Mapan even purchased japtem in bulk. Items from thousands of Orcs! Using his monopoly to buy items cheap, he made a fine profit by reselling them on the spot. His dream of becoming a wealthy merchant was finally coming true, step by step. Depending on the success of the many Orcs now wandering Yuroki, Mapan's profits might grow even larger! Since the number of Orc users were multiplying by the day, one could say that Mapan had discovered a rose-colored life as a merchant.

Most ordinary merchants would have become complacent at this point.

"I've earned lots of money already. I deserve some rest."

However, Mapan was already severely affected by Weed on this point.

"Gotta earn as much as possible while I can. I need to tighten my belt, buy cheap, and sell for even more."

Mapan didn't even bother resting on the roads between the Orc settlements and Exiles' towns. He kept his hands busy as he sat on the coach box. He used a carving knife to improve his handicraft.

"Indeed, a merchant must learn and practice. One must do whatever he can to get rich."

Mapan diligently carved sculptures. He had learned the basics of sculpting back in Rosenheim Kingdom.

His primary goals were to learn weaving and jewelcrafting. After his handicraft reached a certain level, he would be able to learn even more production skills. If a merchant like Mapan buys leather and turns it into clothing, or refines the jewels he purchased, he can double or triple his profits!

However, as neither his handicraft or his other skills could rise quickly because he didn't have a sculptor-like class, Mapan could only handle his carving knife with even more diligence.

Chapter 2: The Golden Statue

Her name was Seechwi. For her race she had chosen to be an orc.

"This is interesting!"

Female Orc!

According to basic human aesthetics, Orcs were considered incredibly ugly. Women usually avoided choosing the Orcs as their race and the proof was that less than 10% of the orcs were female. But she was different.

"For females as well. Orcs are the best! Chwichwik!"

Cha Eunhee was very satisfied with how her appearance had changed.

Her thighs and legs were thick instead of slender. Instead of a long thin neck like a deer it was more like a thick log. But more than that was the large protruding stomach that overlapped itself.

When it was time to make a character, you could change the appearance.

It was even possible to add tribal characteristics to the Orcs.

The body was made to overlap to have more flexibility at the waist and stomach.

Thus Seechwi was born as an imposing female orc.

"So easy. I don't need to worry about my looks anymore. Chwichwit!"

Seechwi was completely satisfied with her appearance.

In order to maintain a slim figure you need to constantly exercise and watch what you eat. She felt like all that mental stress and pressure had disappeared.

"Anyways, where did Seoyoon go to? Chwichwitchwik."

Seechwi's identity was that of Doctor Cha Eunhee, a psychiatrist at the Great Society Rehabilitation Center.

There was a reason an ice queen such as herself would start off as an orc.

She had saw Seoyoon crying in the videos that were stored daily in the capsule.

'I'm glad that you're still able to express emotions. A little of her wounds have healed.'

Seechwi wanted to meet Seoyoon. Up until now, Seoyoon had been allowed to roam alone. She had judge that it was not time to force her to travel with someone.

It was then that the Orc Karichwi accompanied her that things changed.

Holding back tears, she wanted to get Seoyoon to like she was in the past where she could smile and laugh.

"Seoyoon, where did you go. Chwichwit!"

Seechwi could only stomp her feet in frustration.

She was restricted from leaving the city for 4 weeks until now.

Seoyoon was always in the forests or in the valleys. Even with the videos in the capsule, it was difficult to accurately locate the place.

Since Weed became an orc, it would not be very easy for him to meet Seoyoon.

'Seoyoon should be able to quickly find where she ought to go.'

Then someone behind spoke to me.

"ChwikChwik. Hey!"

She looked back to see a fat male orc. A male orc was standing there majestically with a disposable rusted glaive.

There were other orcs next to him.

"ChwiChwiChuet"

"FuChwiChwuik"

"Chwiit, Do you want to join our party of four?"

The pig like orcs stopped by to greet her.

A party request!

It was much easier for orcs to make parties than humans. Those without high leadership could not make large parties. Orcs were able to make parties of 10 to 20 members without any experience penalties.

For that reason orcs actively formed parties. It was extremely rare to hunt alone. Seechwi lifted her head when she heard this.

"Let's go together. Chwi Chwi Chwit"

"That's good. Chuik Chuik!"

Seechwi went hunting together with the Orcs.

'Anyways, I can't see Seoyoon immediately. I need to get better stamina to travel through the mountains easier.'

Seechwi and the orcs went up to the wolves near the village.

Keongkeongkeong!

The wolves could be heard frantically barking. Orcs and wolves were both creatures that hunt in groups. They group up to attack weaker enemies, but usually more Orcs died.

"This is dangerous. Chwichwik!"

"Let's go get them. Seechwi!"

Just as the orcs were going to rush into battle, a wolf jumped at Seechwi. Seechwi saw it coming and side-stepped it. She had learned various different types of self-defense and her body responded in turn. In Royal Road, even if you were not very high level, having a lot of combat experience was very helpful.

This level of attack from the wolves was not very difficult. Seechwi continued to dodge and then raised her stick into the air. And then she struck down.

"It struck!"

It hit the wolf exactly in the center of the head.

Ppajik!

The blow was so powerful that cracks appeared on the stick.

The wolves did not dare to recklessly charge at Seechwi again.

This time it was Seechwi that charged at the wolves.

Every time she took a step, the ground shook because of her heavy body.

'Beating stuff with a stick is the best way to relieve stress!'

Seechwi danced around with a stick in her hand.

She liked the race that she chose. It was simple and there wasn't any need for any complex unnecessary calculations.

"Is, is that all you got. Chwichwichwivit!"

Seechwi squeezed her way through the wolves with her fat body as if she were possessed.

The Karaka Forest.

Pale, Surka, and Zephyr were nervous as they watched closely.

"Huhuhuhuhu"

"Now watch closely."

"I'm quite nervous, Sunsaengnim"

"Of course, this is very important.."

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 was going to show them how to fight properly.

Surprisingly agile and resourceful.

It was hard to believe that the Geomchis could fight so precisely.

They keenly attacked the monsters' weaknesses.

-Struck a fatal blow.

-The stomach has been destroyed.

-The monster's eyes have been attacked. Reduces the monster's field of vision.

-The tendons in the monster's hamstring have been severed. Monster movement speed has been reduced.

Geomchi2 was especially skilled as he skillfully struck through the enemy's defenses without taking damage.

It was hard to inflict damage to monsters with high defense. Even though it was hard to attack weak points like the joints, eyes, or the neck, if an attack is successful then it would inflict a lot of damage.

They were able to overpower monsters early on in the fight.

However, even though it was good, it was even more cruel.

The Karaka Forest was divided into the Beetle Cave, the Hobgoblin Fortress, and the Dread Wolf areas.

The hobgoblins were powerless against their attacks.

"How does he do that?"

At the end Pale, Surka, and Zephyr could not come up with a definite answer.

Leadership was important to battle but it was not the same as knowing how to fight.

Surka let out a deep sigh.

"I guess it's about reading the monster's movements in advance."

The dream of every combat related class!

That was to score fatal critical blows.

People never thought to attack the gaps in the monster's weakness. It was more fun to attack it normally 2 or 3 times.

Hunting parties usually celebrated whenever there was a successful deadly attack.

But Geomchi₂, Geomchi₃, Geomchi₄, and Geomchi₅ were so familiar with combat that they got one every time they attacked.

They were never in the situation where they were surrounded by enemies because they were always moving around..

Zephyr looked at his fishing rod.

"I don't have that kind of taste for fighting."

Pale shrugged.

"I don't understand it either."

Pale and Zephyr both sighed confidently.

Compared to Surka, Pale's and Zephyr's damage was weak. With a sufficient level skill mastery their damage can be pretty strong.

Nevertheless they watched to try and learn how to perform fatal blows

They had struggled with so many different types of monsters, like Yetis, together so they had learn how to do this. Fatal blows were easier to perform from the monster's blind spots.

Yetis had high health and thick leather skin so it was difficult to land fatal blows and do damage.

However the Geomchis revealed that it was possible to against hobgoblins, a similarly leveled monster with lower health.

To some extent Pale was able to inflict a lot of damage.

However Pale and Zephyr needed mana to inflict a lot of damage so they couldn't compare to the general melee classes.

The Geomchis had virtually no body armor. They relied on their endurance and skills for their defense. They did not think they needed to get anything like that in the first place..

In three to four hits they would be on the verge of death, but they never got hit since they avoided the attacks in advance.

They put all of their power into their attacks and received minimal damage. An extraordinary ability to fight!

They grew stronger through reading the flow of battle with their eyes and controlling their bodies in any situation. The Geomchis had climbed to the heights of master in combat ability.

Even though the situation looked very good, it was in fact not.

'Ugh, I'm barely alive. A little bit more and I'm going to end up dying.'

'It would be embarrassing to die in front of the kids.'

'Do not embarrass yourselves! We can't die to something like hobgoblins.'

The Geomchis bitterly regretted that they didn't have any defensive skills.

They never wore any armor and whenever they leveled they

mainly put into strength. And of course they only raised skills that were related to combat.

Thanks to that their hunting speed was very fast. Their damage was abnormally developed. However each moment of a tremendous fight they were on the crossroads of life and death.

Generally they avoided the weapons and attacks of the monsters. They were almost masters of this kind of movement.

But then there were times that they were surrounded by several enemies and died.

After a few times of dying miserably they saw to it that they have to escape being encircled!

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 focused their eyes.

'Be careful not to get surrounded.'

'Got to watch out for monsters coming behind me.'

'Have to gradually split up the monsters while fighting.'

'Need to run away whenever the monsters are densely packed.'

While keeping each other in mind, they thoroughly paid attention to the monster movements.

But generally they were not able to avoid magic attacks. Because of this the Geomchis were desperately fighting. Every time they regretted that they did not invest in defense!

"I can do this very easily."

Geomchi2 grinned at the other Geomchis.

"Of course. It would be a problem to not do this much."

Geomchi3 said hearing him.

"I can handle tens of these guys."

Geomchi4 couldn't say anything..

He was surrounded by a large number of monsters. Because of this, his life was in danger.

Still he laughed, showing his teeth. He laughed to lighten up a little.

The Geomchis checked their remaining health and laughed as well.

"Now, this is great! Weed is surely much better at this than us! Always fighting within an inch of death. So doing this is going to raise our endurance?"

Geomchi5 nodded his head vigorously.

"Of course. He said that's how it's done."

"Then us too!"

Irene naively watched the masters fight and didn't know what to do.

For Weed, it was the right choice because of his high defense. But that was completely different for the Geomchis because with their pride they were unable to fight battles within an inch of their life.

'Must not die.'

'Got to keep up our appearances.'

The Geomchis put all their strength and soul in order to keep up their image.

The younger people relied on mana and long range attacks to fight. Close combat, however, required a higher level of difficulty since there was no resting in the battle for a long time.

Even though the hobgoblins had bad equipment, the Geomchis were much lower level and the damage built up over time.

Even with their lives hanging by a thread, they kept smiling as if they enjoyed the battle.

They were fighting level 270 hobgoblins using pincer formations and sometimes cross attacks.

Geomchi2 and Geomchi3 attacked simultaneously!

Pale and Surka's eyes shone fiercely.

They saw, for a brief moment, a weakness in the hobgoblin's movements. In that moment, Geomchi2 and Geomchi3 moved in for a combined attack.

Keyeeek!

The hobgoblins could only succumb to crying and shrieking!

Geomchi2 and Geomchi3 cleverly used their positioning and formation against the hobgoblins as the battle progressed.

"Ayte!"

Surka plunged into battle with her fists. She relentlessly attacked as she had discovered the weaknesses of the hobgoblins.

'I can not make small attacks.'

It was risky but she targeted the weak points. Examine the monster until its weakness became more apparent. Surka understood this little by little as she fought.

Zephyr and Pale also found their roles. He drove the enemies into one place with a wide range of attacks with his fishing rod and then arrows were shot to inhibit the enemy's movements. Surka and the Geomchis then opened on that opportunity and rained down blows.

They were fighting as a group rather than separately!

The party was inspired by watching the Geomchis behaviour

'So this is how we need to fight monsters.'

'It took a lot of hobgoblins dying to understand their weaknesses but now it makes sense.'

The party enjoyed their battle alongside the Geomchis.

Weed saw different types of artists.

He needed to make a sculpture to register in Rhodium. You needed to make an artwork for the city.

"I must not fail this one."

Weed currently had Advanced Sculpting. At this level, he could not just make something random.

Very large lions and Bingryong!

If you were creating a very large sculpture then there was a higher chance of getting an outstanding piece.

However, this was Rhodium.

It wasn't that making a large sculpture in the city was unreasonable since there were good spots. The problem was getting material.

"So I need to make a great work of a moderate size. For now, I need to find out more."

Weed headed to the crowded street shops first.

Rhodium did not develop its weapons and armor shops much. It was only average. The stores only specialized in selling accessories and other useful things. Smithing fell behind in comparison so inferior goods were made.

Nevertheless, the city of artists still had one.

Sculpting materials!

There was a suitable store in the Kingdom of Rhodium.

Weed went into the material shop.

"Rululu."

A lovely employee had materials on display. Elsewhere there were trees, stones, and unusual metals.

"Whoa, how do they sell all of that?"

Materials were like mountains piled up in her shop! It was a good place to get materials but there were twenty people in the building.

"I have to make it out of top grade material."

There were all types of materials in the shop. In the meantime, the number of people decreased to 5. They glanced around the shop enviously.

"A piece of wood is over 1 gold."

"What kind of sculpture do you make that's over 1 gold?"

"Let's leave. I don't even have 3 copper."

The guests were discouraged and departed.

A good meal would cost them at least 50 copper. They could make a sculpture with a stone or a piece of wood on the side of the road.

The place hasn't sold anything in the last 3 days.

"The prices are too expensive, I'm never going to get enough to buy some new clothes."

Sharlinn, an employee, sighed.

She needed money everyday in order to get bread to eat. She could drink water from a fountain but it wasn't food.

The salary wasn't enough. She got paid minimum wage but in order to make more she needed to sell stuff.

A system of earning from sales!

Sharlinn could only anguish at her situation.

"Huh, worrying is not going to do anything. I don't have any

customers. Might as well clean."

She started to clean. She started to clean the materials on display. Then all of a sudden the store door opened.

Ding!

Sharlinn greeted with a smile.

"Welcome customer!"

Weed quickly entered the store as he was greeted by her.

"This is a material shop. There is a weapon and armor shop to the right. Are you looking for that?"

Weed shook his head.

"No."

"Oh, then you must be here to buy some materials! Please understand that we only sell expensive materials as you can see."

Up till now, Sharlinn had rarely ever had any customers. This was granted to the fact that people rarely bought crafting materials. In fact, Weed's current attire seemed to indicate poverty.

The Yeti fur seemed to resembled old and faded travel clothing! It was as if he were wearing the equipment that was provided at character creation.

Such clothing barely had any defense. It was more common for people to wear lightweight and fashionable clothing.

Weed was dealing with an employee that was an user. Otherwise the reaction would have been different because of his high fame.

Weed slowly looked through the materials.

There were expensive ores and stones with designs on them. There were all kinds of wood as well as gold and silver materials.

It barely had any materials that were suitable for sculptures. It seemed rather impossible for the

City of Artists Rhodium to not have them.

'The materials used as a basis for the sculpture increases the probability of creating a greater piece.'

Rhodium, as a whole, was very large but it did not serve the interest of its artists.

Weed was shaken up when Sharlinn knocked to get his

attention.

"Customer."

"Yes?"

"Would you like me to recommend you a material to use?"

Sharlinn was very bored. People tend to try and find something to do when they have time. She had learned quite a few things about materials, though it couldn't compare to Weed.

Weed nodded.

"Tell me."

Sharlinn opened a shelf and took out a thick piece of wood.

"This is Bemok wood, its durability is very high and it can be processed in a number of ways. It's a good piece of wood for a sculptor to handle. However this is difficult because it is expensive. This is Bora Wood. There are a lot of different aromas. It's possible to make a sculpture that has a scent. However the size is small."

Each piece of wood had their own characteristics. The rigidity of the wood had to be taken in mind as well.

There were also a lot of types of wood with special options.

Weed followed Sharlinn to the corner of the store. A formidable amount of gold, 3 meters in height and width, was piled up.

"This is the pride of the store. Isn't it great? A sculpture made out of this has many different options, but the total price is no less than 7000 gold. It's a tremendous amount."

Weed looked at the gold. There was a bright and noble distinctive sheen to it.

'This is decent stuff for a sculpture.'

Weed secretly made a decision.

"Now, if you look at this side there is a turquoise gem..."

Sharlinn had knowledge about a lot of different types of materials. At first it was out of curiosity but then it became to learn about it enthusiastically.

After hearing her description Weed said.

"I would like to make a purchase."

"Oh? Really? Thank you."

Sharlinn was overjoyed. It was going to be her first successful sale since Weed wanted to buy some materials.

'Even if its cheap, I'll take what I can get.'

Weed fully transcended her expectations.

"I would like to purchase all the gold in the store."

"Yes? The price is...so it is 10 gold a piece and the number of pieces are in total."

Sharlinn calculated the amount. She examined the amount of stock to check how much there was.

"The total amount comes to 18000 gold. No wait a minute. That was the original price of the goods so I need to properly calculate it again."

Sharlinn took all the gold and calculated it again. The price was substantially less. Even without the trading skill, Weed had an enormous amount of fame so the price of items purchased in stores was decreased.

In addition the price of certain materials were discounted depending on the engraver. Because of Weed's advanced sculpting and high fame, the prices was discounted by 30%.

Buying these materials were much cheaper than through a merchant.

'How can there be such a big discount!'

To Sharlinn, it was breathtaking. To do this, someone must have a large amount of fame. One would not suspect a sculptor to have this much.

She saw that she had hit the jackpot.

Even after the reputation and skill reduction, there was still a gain.

Sharlinn swallowed as she asked.

"18000 gold, but 12600 gold after a 30% discount. Would you like to make the purchase?"

"I will buy it."

Weed replied without hesitation.

He made money of the Lich as well as the last 3 years.

He had earned a lot of money from building the pyramid, after

the Legion of the Undead as well as through hunting he managed to collect quite the sum.

Compared to the past, he could afford to spend 12000 gold.

"Gulp!"

Sharlinn swallowed in surprise.

She did not even begin to think that she would make this large of a sale.

'I'll get at least 2500 gold from the sale. I can't believe something this lucky is happening to me!'

Sharlinn couldn't have been more shocked. To something of a beginner she was going to get a windfall of 2500 gold!

But, it was not so easy to get that from Weed.

"Well, then let the negotiations to determine the price begin"

"...?"

Sharlinn momentarily did not understand what he said.

"What are you talking about?"

"How much are you going to discount me?"

"What?"

In front of her there was a famous sculptor and he was still going to bargain at such a price? She could not imagine it.

"Give me a discount of 2500 gold."

"!!!!"

He demanded a price without mercy!

The look in Sharlinn's eyes changed. Before she was looking at a customer, but now it was an unscrupulous thief.

"Then that means that I'm selling it for next to nothing!"

"2,499 gold."

"I'm not selling it."

"2490 gold. Think about it. It's 10 gold less from before."

Weed took out his cash.

He was prepared in advance to pay. He also knew the actual value of the item.

"Sob sob! To think that there's someone like this."

Sharlinn tearfully sold the materials.

Weed swept the goods into his backpack, feeling the sudden change in weight.

He was tempted to find out how much it weighed. His backpack would hold things at a fourth of the weight and it could carry much more.

Weed took a chunk of metal from his bag.

"Identify!"

Black smelting material :

Durability 100/100

Metallic crafting material.

It was combined with a number of different materials through blacksmithing.

Can not return to its past pure state once joined with other

metals. An excellent blacksmith may be able to revert it.

Mixes well with steel and mithril.

"I'm going to need to melt it."

Weed's idea was to make armor.

Equipment has become exceedingly scarce as compared to the past.

Orcs lived in a simple lifestyle, but there was more needed for humans.

So he had to get a new one.

Weed roughly gauged the metal with his eyes.

'I need to make about 5 pieces of armor.'

Mithril's weight was exceedingly light. This gave weight reduction effects of crafted boots and helmets.

As a result, movement and agility were greatly increased and lightened the burden of battle.

It felt good when he was Karichwi and he was able to move

around freely and deal strong attacks.

Weed, in fact, already had armor.

Talrok's unique armor given from the Church of Freya!

A highly esteemed dwarven blacksmith with a whopping 85 defense.

It was a level 350 armor. But every level of blacksmithing reduced the equipment restrictions by 2%.

With his Intermediate Level 2 Blacksmithing, Weed was able to wear Talrok's Armor.

"Hooohoo"

There was a wily smile on Weed's lips.

That was how he felt whenever he identified Talrok's Faith Armor.

An expensive and precious armor of tremendous value!

There were a lot of armors better than it, but it was difficult to acquire unique items.

Its product value was far about the Saint's Staff and the Necromancer's Tome.

He would be stopped in Rhodium because of his armor.

The black mithril armor would shine and catch the attention of others.

Beggars!

He would not think of wearing mithril since beggars would rush him.

Weed found the blacksmith and went inside. Dwarves were working actively.

Caenkkangkang!

The Dwarves hammered a blade that was heated by the bellows. They were citizens instead of users.

It was not difficult to see dwarves working in the center of every city.

The Dwarf in charge welcomed him.

"What can I do for you Human?"

"Please melt this."

Weed pulled the black lump from his bag.

"Can you do it?"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute, this is!!!!"

"What is it?"

He was not thinking that it was special but now he was expecting something from the dwarf's reactions.

It required higher skills and professional knowledge in order to get an item's complete information through identification. He was hoping that this was the case.

The dwarf could not hide his astonishment.

"It's a complete mess. It's a horrid mix of several metals."

"..."

He had not expected anything special from its appearance. The dwarf noticed the same thing as Weed, a black lump.

"You can sell it to use for a decent value. You can also dissolve it and we can make you some weapons and armor."

"I'll decline. Just melt it and give it to me."

"That's too bad. I would have wanted this wonderful piece of metal."

The dwarf embarked on the task.

If he left it to the dwarves, he would get better armor. But he could not leave it to the dwarves because of his Blacksmith Intermediate Level 2.

Weed wanted the opportunity to raise his skills.

'This is a good opportunity to raise blacksmithing.'

Weed did not rely heavily on equipment. No matter how good the armor, he worked to raise his skills and stats.

Riiitrrring!

The dwarf put the black lump in the high temperature hearth and used the bellows. The lump melted little by little until it separated into various metals.

Weed could have also separated the black lump but his skill level was low and he would not be able to separate as much metal. First the dwarf removed the steel, then black iron, and finally mithril.

"Here it is. It'll be 700 gold but since you are a bright adventurer I can bring it down by 50 gold and another 20 for bringing me some interesting stuff."

"Thank you."

Weed had waited a long time for the black iron and mithril. He was even able to get some tempered steel.

Sculptures were greatly affected by the surrounding area. The effects of a sculpture differed based on its surrounding like the difference in heaven and earth.

"Need a good place..."

Weed wandered to find the perfect place in Rhodium. There were many streets with a variety of paintings and sculptures.

"I can't put my sculpture there."

Weed first went to the central square.

It was a beggar infested place! But it was also the place with the most art. Rare plants, trees and flowers grew there. It looked like a

park for couples.

There were performances in the morning and evening. Almost all of Rhodium wanted to display their art here. People and travelers flooded in to see the clear water fountain.

If he built a sculpture here, it was sure to get recognition.

But Weed abandoned the square without regrets.

'Everyone would find out about me.'

There were too many people to make a gold statue. Furthermore, if they knew he had money then beggars would stick onto him.

Weed thought about going into the alleys. The alleys in Rhodium were intricately shaped like a spider's web!

There were shops nestled in here. There were not many people walking around like the residential areas.

Weed was able to find a place without many people during the day.

"Okay. This place is suitable."

People did not own private property in Rhodium. People could

rest and sell items but they had to pay taxes accordingly. As a result, Rhodium did not have any people that had enough money to own a house. Weed set a small fire burning. Then he started smelting the gold.

"First I have to make a plate."

Weed made a mold out of clay. To make a statue of gold, he needed to take advantage of time. He dissolved the gold using his blacksmith skills. The blacksmith skills were required to make a variety of sculptures!

Weed finished the first clay mold, then he poured gold into it.

He felt sick each time he put the crystal clear gold into the mold.

"Why the hell do I have to do this."

A new regret to add the the job of the engraver!

It was a tough and pitiful job to make money from. Even if you make something in earnest, you do not make a lot of money. In a situation like this, one does not even make money.

"Why did I pick art! It's harder to live on art."

Weed felt pained as he waited for the gold in the molds to hold. He pulled out a hammer, an anvil, and miscellaneous ores.

"Now to raise skill proficiency."

As Karichwi, he gathered ores on hunting commissions. There was a lot of high quality ore in the Eurokey Mountains. He got a lot of ores and jewels from orc quest rewards that he needed to dispose of.

There was iron, copper, bronze, and even gold mixed with silver.

"Selling all of these will earn a lot more than sculptures."

Weed began to work on a pile of ores.

He melted the ore to get the metal. Then he poured a certain amount of metal into a frame.

Profits!

It began to take a shape of a blade.

Caenkkangkkang!

Weed struck the steel with the hammer.

Unlike a sculptor, a blacksmith did not need to use a lot of force but simply hit in rhythm. The number of hits affected durability

and balance. In some cases, a sword could come out unique and sold for a lot.

This was possible because Royal Road was virtual reality.

It was quite difficult to use a sword with a bad center of gravity.

"This one came out nicely."

Weed sprinkled water to cool the red hot blade. Meanwhile, he pulled out more molten iron from the hearth. He gathered all the ore he had up to now to make equipment.

Armor had a more complex structure than swords.

But even with a more complex structure, it was more advantageous since there wasn't much to worry about. When creating a sword the center of gravity needs to be taken into account.

It was useful that Weed could swing a sword a couple of times to test of the center of gravity.

Blacksmithing skills have risen 0.1%.

Blacksmithing skills have risen 0.3%.

Blacksmithing skills have risen 0.4%.

Blacksmithing skills have risen 0.1%.

Whenever he completed a sword, blacksmithing gradually rose.

'I need to make about 500 or so swords to get to the next level?'

Blacksmithing skill was easy to learn early on. Compared to sculpting, it was incredibly easier.

As the skill level rose, it became more challenging to raise. The amount of physical labor for Intermediate Level 2 was considered significant.

'Now for the steel swords.'

In blacksmithing, with good materials it was possible to make fine or grand pieces to raise the skill faster. It was an expensive way to get faster growth.

Clank.

Weed completed a pile of swords and set them aside.

He worked on checking each of them manually. They were, on average, between 20 and 45 attack.

That was the limit of swords made from common materials. It was reported that a dwarven blacksmith with advanced blacksmithing could make an iron sword with 60 attack.

Intermediate blacksmithing would produced lesser results.

'I'll probably get 100 gold a piece for them.'

The price will vary based on the options on them, but on average they will be 100 gold each.

Swords made with Weed's Advanced Dexterity produced unusually higher durability at a significantly higher rate. Generally, swords with higher durability were preferred. Sword durability tended to drop quickly when fighting monsters with high defense.

On the other hand, Weed was crafting other things.

He made leather clothing using molten iron as well. An inexhaustible spirit for multitasking!

As much time should be eliminated as possible.

'I can't rest while other people are getting stronger through hunting!'

Weed continued to do the physical labor repeatedly.

Physical labor could not rest for a moment.

Work to death one day and rest the next day. When one is rested, then work the rest of the day.

It was really basic.

While he was doing one task, briefly in the middle of the spare time perform another task.

While resting to recover mana and health, sculpt or sew.

Weed's skills grew fast for this reason.

Weed was constantly working to make leather clothes.

Cutting and sewing clothes was all too familiar to him. The needle in his hand speeds through as he sews on buttons.

It was as if his hands were moving lightning fast!

"I used to sew on the buttons to hundreds of thousands of dolls. This much is easy."

Weed took a break in making swords to sew leather.

-Tailoring has risen to Intermediate Level 3.

You can now dye clothes a specific color.

You can now convert soft and hard leather from monsters.

After he finished sewing, he went back to swords.

-Blacksmithing has risen to Intermediate Level 3.

Attack and defense of crafted items increase by a certain amount.

More effective siege weapons can be produced.

He stopped working once he leveled up tailoring and blacksmithing. He looked around to see a pile of swords and clothes.

"Now time for the real part."

He pulled out the mithril. He was going to be producing the armor himself.

"Identify!"

Black Iron: Durability 30/30

Can obtain metal by smelting ore.

Can produce a variety of different goods and purposes.

Can be processed in many ways but mainly used to make armor.

Intermediate blacksmith skills required to handle.

Very rare to obtain in large quantities. Turns black when mixed with other metals.

2nd tier blacksmith materials.

Options:

Excellent defense against physical attacks.

Mithril ore was easily tier 2 blacksmith material. It was almost never sold in stores. There was so little that you needed to mix other metals. Weed raised the mithril up. It did not even weigh a few kilograms.

Mithril:

Durability 50/50

Superfine blacksmith materials.

All blacksmiths want to use it.

To get to this state of mithril, only very small amounts can be obtained.

Great improvements in performance when mixed into swords or armor.

It is clear and give off light. Has the ability to protect from magic.

Mithril requires at least intermediate blacksmithing. To use properly requires Advanced Blacksmithing.

Tier 1 blacksmith materials.

Options:

Increases in physical power and magic resist.

Increased fame and charm.

Weed mixed the black iron and mithril into a mold. Then he hit it with the hammer.

Wham! Wham! Wham!

Both black iron and mithril were very tough metals so it required a lot of force to process. A lot of strength was required for blacksmithing.

However, Weed's strength become excellent when he turned into an orc. Even though sculptors are weak, he invested strength into strength and agility only each level.

He got vitality from fishing and he raised his defense with endurance by monster attacks.

His art grew thanks to his many crafting skills. Thanks to that, he had high strength and agility. Weed completed the helmet.

Blacksmith proficiency has increased by 7%

"Identify!"

Elegant Black Helmet of a Young Noble:

Durability 150/150

Defense 32

A work made by a very talented blacksmith.

The admiration is because of its high level of difficulty and meticulous dexterity in making it.

It appears that the skills were immature to handle mithril

completely.

The black gloss and sheen has considerable artistic beauty.

Nevertheless, it has outstanding defense and protection from monsters.

Restrictions:

Strength 300

Level 300

Options:

Agility +30

Charm +70

Art +20

Wisdom +20

Intellect +10

Fame +200

Leadership +30%

Immune to confusion magic.

Magic resist +15%

The item came out decent.

It would have come out better if Weed's blacksmithing was higher but it was unavoidable.

Weed now made boots. Weed did not make that many boots before so it was difficult. The value of boots was largely dependent on agility. So he had to use all the remaining mithril.

Blacksmith proficiency has increased by 8%.

"Identify!"

Precious Lightweight Black Boots:

Durability: 130/130

Defense: 14

Mithril boots are light and protect your feet. No matter how long the distance, one will not seem tired.

A talented blacksmith made this despite a lack of skills to properly handle mithril. As a result, the mithril is not strong enough.

Restrictions:

Strength 150

Agility 300

Level 300

Options:

Movement speed increases by 15% Only consumes mana.

Agility +70 Art +20

Fame +100

Prevents loss in physical state from long distance travel.

Easily walk in rough terrain.

They were not as good as the boots that the Lich Shire had been wearing but they came out decent.

"There's a decent amount of movement speed and agility."

Weed was pleased.

If there was even a single option that increased movement speed then the item value was several times higher.

Being able to move faster than others during battle!

The benefits were tremendous. It became much easier to avoid enemy attacks.

In the case of a ranged attack from an archer or mage, it was possible to reach them much faster.

Those with higher movement speed were less likely to die in contrast to those without. For this reason, movement speed was very expensive and insufficient in quantity.

The boots had a 15% increase in movement speed and they were fairly decent as well.

Chapter 3: The Silhouette Of A Golden Statue

Northern Expedition!

The Cold Roses Guild finally finished setting up the expedition and was finally ready to start exploring. There was an impressive total of 1300 members. Oberon and his allies thought it was good to get as many people they could.

But with greater numbers, management of them all became more difficult. It became more difficult to gather the necessary materials for the situation. It was a good idea to increase their numbers but not this much.

Expeditions usually had 50 to 100 people. In some cases, over 200 people would occupy a dungeon for leveling.

For such a dangerous place, it was better to have 7 to 8 high leveled players.

It was because they could smartly avoid hazardous situations that lead to death.

Larger numbers were more formidable and safe, but there were also disadvantages.

Oberon talked to his aids.

"There are so many people taking part in the expedition that I think I need to cut down on some."

"That will be difficult."

Kerberos frowned at the guild leader.

"That current situation will not let us reject them."

"This is a dangerous place. We can't just bring along a crowd."

"We have a handful of adventurers as well as some of the highest level players in the northern continent."

"So only the higher levels should go."

"Suppose if they fail to survive. We need to consider bringing more people if necessary."

Kerberos concluded his thoughts to Oberon.

"So you're saying that we should bring a large force?"

"It's hard to say. We don't know what will happen in the north. There are quite a few adventurers that dislike sharing information

about the north. Even if it might be useless, we will still gain popularity."

"That is true."

Oberon agreed immediately.

It was useless to go to the north based on public information only. They didn't know anything about the cities in the north or the hazardous areas! They didn't even know exactly where to go.

"The monsters we will face in the north will be very dangerous. What can we do about the lack of information?"

"Kerberos, it is already time. Send word to the scouts before it gets delayed any further."

"Yes, I think so. We need to keep a few men in case of the situation that the high levels are wiped out."

Oberon was skeptical.

"Is that the case? There will certainly be situations like monster raids at night. Even if I keep a few men, won't they have to fight?"

Kerberos did not deny it.

"Hopefully our friends will be more helpful than a few well trained men. It will be difficult to deny participation to those within our alliance."

Oberon and the Cold Roses were mostly focused on when to leave to the north. They would be surrounding themselves with a large number of users who may be greedy. A guild may perform a surprise raid on some of the castles that they own.

They would have noticed such a large group of people on the move. However, gathering as many forces as they could was the priority.

Oberon took into account all of the power of the Cold Roses Guild with him.

It was because they were able to trust in Oberon.

Dwarf warrior Oberon!

He roamed throughout the kingdoms with his soldiers.

They went on adventures such as liberating towns from monsters, fighting other users to protect the weak, and risking their lives for others.

Even in a difficult situation he would extend his hand to help the weak!

He led a large force of his friends, many of which were warriors, into various hunting grounds.

Tens of thousands have heard of his fame and because of this named him Dwarf Warrior Oberon.

The Cold Roses Guild had been formed by Oberon and his followers. The Cold Roses Guild was a mid to high range guild on the Versailles Continent but fewer than 100 people were Oberon's men.

So in order to expand the influence of the guild, they decided to go on an expedition.

Ultimately the Cold Roses Guild decided on going to explore the North.

"I will not accept any complaints. They do not have to take part if they are unwilling. Even if there are risks, isn't it unlikely that they will leave?"

"The group will eventually accept it."

In that sense, Oberon had decided and ended his conversation with Kerberos.

If they wanted to be in the expedition they wouldn't be allowed

to have any complaints.

Since trust was critical to Oberon, he declined several people.

The initial plan was to recruit the elites but that was torn down and the criteria was expanded to anyone being accepted.

Warrior and adventurer classes. The participation of these classes increased significantly because of this.

Drum and Kerberos wanted to capitalize on this opportunity.

"The leader is too naive."

"Adventure. Exploration. Discovery. It's not good. However, it is a chance to get some fame. This is something we can't pass up."

Kerberos and Drum exchanged meaningful glances. They had the same thing in mind.

"We should take advantage of this opportunity. We can raise the reputation of Oberon and the Cold Roses Guild. So we should accept as many people as possible into the expedition."

That was Kerberos's intention. Kerberos accepted several guilds within the kingdom. Thanks to that, anyone could join. The Cold Roses Guild and their allies. They flaunted a large force. There were over 1300 people and many others watching from afar.

There wasn't much of a choice.

Kerberos and Drum had done this intentionally. They splurged on the troops in order to raise the guild's reputation. They had advertised it outside the castle a few days before. There were a lot of spectators. A massive expedition.

It would take a few months to get the expedition to the north because of their large numbers.

There was idle talk.

"Got to get there safely."

"I need a souvenir..."

"Don't worry and just wait."

People deliberately came from far away distances.

The rumors that both the Cold Roses Guild and their allies were gathering power began to become troublesome.

The head of the alliance had to work up a good speech.

"We leave this city to go off to the land of adventure! There will

be risks but there are also opportunities. For those that wish to go, let us seize the day!

"Yea!"

"We set off to explore a new land. We will make our mark in the soil of this new frontier. There will be new experiences and memories waiting to be made with the people you meet.

Stories will spread far and wide of our actions. We will be heroes of legends!"

"Wooooahh!"

One by one, the people that had raised complaints at the beginning of the expedition had changed to cheering.

Despite how it sounded from the speech, it was actually going to be a very drastic expedition with a significant amount of risk.

There was not going to be any proper place to rest in the bitter cold expanses of the north.

It, however, had a magnificent effect on raising the morale of the expedition. For the sake of formalities, this ceremony was indispensable.

It finally came for Oberon's turn after the head of alliance gave

his speech.

Oberon stood on the podium silently and looked around.

"..."

The expedition and the crowd held their breaths as they waited for his words.

The warrior guilds had immense faith in Oberon!

There was much tension as to what the famous Oberon was going to say.

Oberon's words were not very long.

"Let's forget about the heat. Let us go to somewhere cold. We will get rid of the heat!"

And that was it.

The eyes of spectators and the expedition shone fiercely.

There were tens of thousands of people in the expedition and the video was being streamed to millions.

If the expedition was successful, then more than 50 million

people would see the video. This was a great opportunity to get publicity.

Usually a good leader would give a speech for ten minutes, but Oberon's speech was short.

But the hearts and minds of the expedition became even stronger.

"Get rid of the heat on the Versailles Continent"

'We are going to the North!'

Oberon's words had the power to leave a lingering feeling that filled the chests of the expedition.

With Oberon's words, the ceremony was over.

People said their goodbyes to friends after a hearty meal.

Neiiiigh!

The expedition set off.

Merchants stocked up with goods began to move as the Dark Gamers led in front.

*

"It's hot."

Volk said as he fanned himself with his hand. It was very boring for most of the Dark Gamers. Oberon was fortunate to have enlisted them.

"This was an annoying commission to accept."

Thirty other Dark Gamers nodded their heads at Volk's words. They agreed since it was similar to most of the other commissions that they have been commissioned to participate and suffer in.

However, some of the Dark Gamers were a little bit excited.

It was the first time that they got to explore such a vast place.

An expedition of this scale was unprecedented and only one had ever been formed before to reclaim the the Rosenheim Kingdom from the Brent Kingdom.

The Dark Gamers were inspired to become historical heroes.

"Let's depart."

"Let's go!"

All the preparations were completed and the expedition set off.

The noobs watched enviously from the gates as they set off.

"Do you think that they'll run into any problems?"

"It's not impossible. It depends on how loyal they are going to be to the expedition."

"I think so too but I still think it's fascinating. It's no joke to his ability and his capacity to get quests and information from the residents."

"Let's stop hunting and go eat some soup that Elen made."

"Parties are fun. You get to adventure around, eat good food, and there are lots of pretty girls. How am I ever going to get over 100 fame?"

"I exceeded a 100 fame earlier when I turned in a Retrieve Fox Tail Quest."

"You have to work hard and do quests to get fame."

"I know. I've tried myself."

"Let's go and get some food to eat."

The noobs were envious but they had work to do.

*

Weed kept dissolving ore to pass time. Of all the swords and armors he made, there was one unique piece that he got using sculpting.

A nine tailed fox!

Ttring!

The item properties have changed.

Sculpting skills have improved.

Handicrafting skills have improved.

Advanced Sculpting gave up to three stats on finished items. It used to raise it 1 or 2 points in the past, but now it gave 10 strength and 10 agility.

"So it changes depending on the level of the finished product."

Sculpting was less effective on weaker items. With better

products there were more exceptional abilities endowed.

"Hopefully it can improve proficiency this way"

High level users had better stats on their items.

At first, players only cared about finding clothing and weapons that look nice.

However, it was better to fight solo if team mates keep dying in dangerous dungeons.

Trust in weapons and armor. Rely on swords and armor to fight until you lose your life. Until it becomes like an extension of your arms and legs.

Spend a fortune to buy armor and weapons.

There were still a bunch of people concerned with the color and design of weapons and armor. People that can craft weapons can earn a substantial amount of money.

'I guess this is another secret of sculpting.'

Weed found a way to earn a little bit more money!

Sculpting on items did not improve proficiency that much.

Advanced sculpting, no matter the level, could not improve it beyond a certain point.

It could improve equipment a little bit or render it more useless.

- Defense and durability have been reduced.

In addition, excessive sculpting could decline the ability significantly.

Swords would also decrease in damage sometimes.

"So I can only outline it slightly and not overdo it."

Weed began to learn more about sculpting. He sculpted on the swords, armor, and sewn clothing.

As a result, the black steel swords and armors came out with great options.

There were some with useless stats like charm, but the Mithril Boots and Helmet with the fox raised the affinity by quite a lot.

30 strength, 20 agility, and 120 fame!

Good equipment proved to have higher increases.

All the sewing and blacksmithing was done and now only one thing remained for Weed. To create the sculpture.

"Let's get it out of there."

Weed pulled off the earthen mold. Then a brilliant light came out from the gold pieces.

He kept pulling out more gold pieces.

"The amount that will go into the statue will be about 7000 gold."

Weed felt a sick feeling in his chest.

A statue made of gold. The gold pieces were quite small. He had dissolved the gold into plates in order to make the statues.

But it was not yet completed.

"Time for the last part."

Weed carefully worked on the face, ears, and fingers. A fundamental part of the mold was made.

Then he made detailed representation of the necessary parts like clothes and knuckles.

He gradually got rid of the rough edges and smoothed it out.

Then the sculpture was completed.

A sculpture was in the city of art, Rhodium. It was a gold sculpture.

Please set the name of the sculpture.

Weed thought about what answer to give.

"Sculptor with a lot of money."

The worst naming sense!

Countless artists could cry hearing that name.

Sculptor with a lot of money correct?

"That's right."

Ttring!

Masterpiece! You have completed Sculptor with a lot of money.

The dazzling material further enhanced the value of the art.

Statue of pure gold!

It was not easy to complete a sculptor by smelting gold.

To symbolize the glory and the challenges of the sculptor, the city's art will shine more brightly.

Artistic Value: 7100

Special Options:

Sculptor with a lot of money increases health and mana regeneration by 30% for one day.

Increased drop rate by 15% for one day.

Luck increased by 60.

Two properties increased by 10%: Merchanting skills increased. Art skills increased.

The statue is located in the center of the city or kingdom, so the frequency of crime will increase.

Does not overlap with other sculptures.

Until now the number of masterpieces completed: 3

Sculpting skills have improved.

Handicrafting skill has improved.

Sculptural Understanding has advanced one level.

Fame has increased by 520.

Stamina has increased by 3.

Sculptor with a lot of money has become the specialty of Rhodium. Many travelers will visit to see the colorful sculptures.

Weed is given ownership of Sculptor with a lot of money. If Weed gives life to the sculpture in the future, then it will be loyal to him.

All stats have increased by 3 for creating a masterpiece.

He had not made that many masterpieces.

Original masterpieces were quite rare.

It was the first of its kind!

It was a sculpture that was recognized by its blacksmithing skill.

If he tried using blacksmithing again and the final product was not outstanding, then it would be fairly difficult to make another masterpiece.

After making thousands of piece, it would finally bear fruit and a

masterpiece would emerge.

It was the pleasure of the final product.

'A reward for my troubles.'

Weed started to smile.

People usually mistake sculptors for a profession that cuts things.

But a real sculptor can make things in any dimension.

Sculptors can use any techniques, including blacksmithing.

Sculptors with second job advancements varied considerably.

Metal sculptor, structural sculptor, stone sculptor, earthen sculptor, and jewelry sculptor...

Because there were various jobs in the palace and city, there were dozens of forms of sculptors.

However, that was not the case with the Moonlight Sculptor. The job was relatively unknown so there was no information about it and the quest requirements were too high.

Ttiring!

Artists of Rhodium has been completed.

You have created an excellent sculptural masterpiece by yourself.

The finished product is enough to be accepted in the city of artists.

You are now able to register at the various art guilds.

Quest reward:

Go back to the artist guild to register. You can receive sculpting related quests.

Quest success!

But there was no rewards compared to the suffering of the quest.

An low level sculptor could not be picky in the city of artists Rhodium

Weed's standards were too high and went through more trouble than he needed.

He was able to make a sculpture using a separate class! Sculpting, in a way, had an amazing ripple effect

Sculpting was not directly useful to combat skills or for adventure. It couldn't take care of immediate needs since it was difficult and required a lot of time.

However, it was good for the development of kingdoms and cities. Sculptures draw people's attention creating culture and strengthening national power

Thanks to the large lion sculpture, tourists flock to Rosenheim and the dungeons are overflowing with players.

A single art class could influence the future and strength of an entire kingdom! But Weed was not interested in a country.

Rather he did not like it at all.

"It's a good thing that I made this sculpture. Grant life to sculpture!"

Weed patted the head of the gold sculpture.

The sculpture of the man was a little shorter than him. But it was

made entirely of gold.

Hooowwoooooooo!

The gold started to heat up.

Once it was red hot, it gradually started to move its body.

You have given life to the sculpture.

The level of the sculpture will be made from converting the 762 art stats, making it level 351.

It's level will be increased 20% because it is a great masterpiece to 420.

Three properties have been granted.

The abilities will be granted based on the sculpture's properties and level.

Properties:

Fire 50%

Metal 100%

Water 60%

Can ignore the majority of metallic magic. However, due to its golden properties, it is softer than usual. Unlimited use of fire.

However, excessive fire can melt and liquify the body.

Enemies can be attacked in various ways from melting the body and can be useful.

However, a change in liquid will reflect on the body.

5000 mana has been consumed.

10 art stats have been reduced.

Stats can be regained through art related activity.

Level has declined by 2.

The 10 most recent stat points have been decreased.

The stats can be raised again upon level up.

Please respect the life granted to the sculpture.

If he loses his life, then the sculpture needs to be granted life again to return his soul.

Cannot be granted life if completely destroyed.

A sculptor's dream!

He gave life to the masterpiece sculpture and the finished level was 420.

It also had amazing power and it could gain experience by fighting.

'I should grant life to the Seoyoon sculpture later.'

Weed told himself to someday return to the Canyon to give life to his first masterpiece of Seoyoon.

He could not use the skill to give life often.

It was because it cost 2 levels and 10 art stats. but as art continues to grow the results get better.

Sculptures that were granted life had good growth rate.

Yiiiing!

The gold statue opened its eyes and woke up.

The statue instinctively looked at Weed as if he were its father.

It could not feel good and happy since it was made out of gold and it was a masterpiece.

The statue gave off a yellow flash and said.

"Golgolgolgol! Please tell me my name."

Weed immediately gave him a name.

"Your name is Geumini."

"Geumini. Geumini. Golgolgol!"

Geumini repeated his name in his mind.

"I will fight together with master against any enemy!"

Weed obtained an absolutely loyal servant.

It would lose its life when it was destroyed but the sculpture had absolute loyalty and would sacrifice its life for him.

*

"Ahhhhhhh!"

A roar echoed off.

The Wyverns were screaming in the sky.

The 6 Wyverns flew in formation in a magnificent grandeur.

They were the most experienced members. Four had died in the battle against the Lich Shire and these were all the remained of the Wyverns that Weed made.

Sculptures were created in the image of their owner.

Thus they acted according to their instincts quite naturally.

Wah-il, Wah-thul, Wah-sam, Wah-oh, Wah-yook, and Wah-chil.

He had made their quickly so that's why their names were in order since it cost him art stats.

"Kuuahhho!"

The Wyverns would sometimes go to the ground to eat animals to fill their stomachs. At night they would sleep in large caves or on cliffs. They would take breaks to recover their stamina after flying.

By flapping their wings they could move at a very fast pace.

However, it was different in their case.

"Flying is too hard!"

Wah-chil complained.

"The wind keeps hitting against my body."

Wyverns were mostly supposed to be like birds with sleek, streamlined bodies.

That was to minimize wind resistance.

Weed was short on time and created them roughly.

Angular faced Wyvern! A huge bulging stomach.

Indeed, it was the worst structure for flying.

The wind on their face and body during flight was no joke.

Because of the speed they were going at, their stamina ran out quickly.

It was hard for them to fly with Weed for days. So the Wyverns would expand their wings and glide. The villages and land would pass by them quickly.

*

Lee Hayan has been wondering for awhile about whether or not to inform Lee Hyun

Admission to the University of Korea.

Admittance based on history of awards. Eligibility was made based on the awards and merit.

She waited until he had passed the document screening and interview.

"Why I didn't tell you earlier? Because you wouldn't go."

He could only feel disappointed at the end of her words.

'I'll just drop in and then go home.'

Lee Hayan went to see an interview. It was difficult to find people like Lee Hyun.

30 minutes early to the interview.

She safely finished the interview nervously.

However the tension was not over.

'I must get a scholarship at all costs.'

Lee Hyun had promised her.

If she could get a scholarship, then Lee Hyun promised that he would go to the University of Korea.

Lee Hayan was now waiting for the results.

*

Wherever they went there was a big fuss. It was the first large scale expedition into the north.

"Get rid of the heat!"

"We look forward to the adventures to be had in the north."

People were celebrating the expedition with envy as morale increased.

The expedition kept increasing in size.

Every time they visited a city, friends and colleagues of Oberon would join. The expedition showed greater strength when the blacksmith Trumann and the seamstress Cadmus joined. Trumann was an Intermediate Level 7 Blacksmith.

He was ranked fifth amongst the Versailles Continent in Blacksmithing.

He never hunted monsters beyond foxes. He was never curious after that.

Trumann would laugh after having hunted foxes.

"Instead of fighting, I made and carried weapons that would help my colleagues."

Trumann made heaps of weapons all day long.

A pitch black blade called Sword of Darkness.

Sword of Imprisonment was a beautiful blue blade like the sky, but it actually freezes enemies.

Some of his weapons were capable of dealing 10% more damage against armor.

Oberon smiled to have a master craftsman like Trumann of the industry join his expedition.

"Welcome! I ask that I can entrust all of the expedition's weapons to you."

Oberon and Trumann had a slight friendship.

In the past Trumann had a quest to make any weapon, but the material was in the Lizardmen's Lair.

Stinger Shooting Lizardmen were not high level but they were very tricky.

No man would courageously enter the Lizardman Lair.

But Oberon went inside and retrieved the material.

Because of this bond, Trumann went with the expedition as the blacksmith.

Compared to that, Cadmus was an oddity.

"I have to make clothes. Comfortable clothes, practical clothes, I want to make clothes that can be worn in any environment."

Cadmus wanted to go to the North to put her sewing skills to the

test.

Intermediate Level 6 Sewing Skills!

For the third ranked seamstress, putting on a button was nothing for Cadmus the tycoon.

The well-known Cadmus and Trumann joining the expedition gave further hope to the expedition.

Oberon stood on a hill overlooking his expedition from horseback.

"Must I bring all these people to go with me?"

Drum nodded at Oberon's question.

"Yes, as I mentioned before architects and chefs are essential. Bards will help you travel."

"Is it necessarily bad enough that we have to take all the guilds in Rhodium?"

Kerberos weighed the question. Bards were not that rare. It would have been better to bring in some from the guild rather than strangers.

"The real skill is in the guilds of Rhodium. We mainly focus on combat so we usually neglect bards."

"Come to think of it, Bards enhance fighting."

Kerberos affirmed this.

Bards were a musical profession that helps raise stats and create a relaxing atmosphere.

However the bards in the guild were different. Combat type bards!

Their flexibility of using the musical instrument as a weapon rather than singing.

"So we need to take people in art related professions."

Oberon gave Drum permission.

"Do as you wish."

Oberon firmly gave his permission. He entrusted him with the rest.

"Drum, you see to it that it's taken care of."

The amount of people they have had already increased a lot. It made no difference if a few more join.

Indeed, that was Oberon the Warrior. He was skilled at taking down monsters. Of course he couldn't see the meaning in art.

He left anything he couldn't do for them to take care of.

But Oberon did not forget to be careful."

"The Northern Expedition is not going to be a walk in the park. Artists are just going to weigh you down. Go ahead with your plans. Just don't regret your decisions later."

"Understood."

"Now, go into the city. Kerberos."

"Yes leader."

"Are we far from the northern part of the continent?"

"Yes, we are a far distance away from the central continent. Hereafter, we may need to teleport to move about."

"Where are we going?"

"For when we need to go up Ras Hill."

Ras Hill was the name of a hill in the center of the northern continent. Its name and location had been identified by adventurers.

Oberon nodded his head.

"So the search starts from there."

"Yes."

"Bring wizards so that we can create a teleport circle."

"I'll prepare a teleport circle in the plains."

"How many people can we move at once?"

"We can send 150 people. Taking mana and health consumption into account, it can be used 3 times a day for about 450."

"So it'll take 3 to 4 days to move everyone."

"That's roughly how long it will take."

Teleport Circle.

Capable of large scale movement to a specific location.

Using many magic stones and reagents, the teleport circle can move roughly a little more than 150 people with luggage.

The magic stones and reagents were very expensive and difficult to obtain.

If they were to fail the northern expedition, the Cold Roses Guild would take a huge hit.

They had not planned to use this much money. But the preparation processes kept growing.

They had to use a lot more materials now. If the plan to cool the continent were to fail, then the guild would go bankrupt.

'I hope everything will be fine.'

Oberon and his aides closed their eyes.

Their home was in the center of the continent. The longer they are away, the more the guild's villages will be in danger. They had to finish early in one month and no later than 2-3 months.

Volk and the rest of the Dark Gamers went to Rhodium.

They were given a few days to relax.

"Well, see ya man."

"I'll see you later."

The Dark Gamers greeted each other and said their goodbyes.

Their final preparations were to check their equipment for the expedition.

There were accomplished values for the Dark Gamers.

Life and physical ability. If one does not play properly then their performance drops.

The Dark Gamers prepared thoroughly for any quest.

Because of that, Dark Gamers survived most of their battles.

"Let's go get some alcohol this evening."

"I heard that Rhodium has a really fancy pub."

"Not bad."

Some of the Dark Gamers met with acquaintances for drinks.

The pub was relatively nice and it gave off a nice atmosphere from the expensive furniture. It didn't feel like a pub.

"Who's covering the bill?"

"To each their own."

"We'll meet up in the evening then."

Other Dark Gamers scattered around to gather information.

Volk and Darelyn walked together holding hands.

"It's a beautiful place."

Volk said after a long time.

Volk did not seem very to be one that enjoyed art but he had a romantic look in his eye.

"Yea, all the city city's art is gorgeous."

The couple walked together as they smile to each other. They had courage when they were up against ferocious monsters but they also had this side to them.

"Money please!"

"Please give me some money!"

"Help me please!"

It was considerably fun to watch the beggars cling onto the people in the expedition.

That was because the expedition was high leveled and had fancy equipment.

They thought that money would flow out of them like water.

There was a stampede of beggars. The expedition had to give money to some of them.

Dark Gamers were, however, more inconspicuous to avoid attracting unnecessary attention.

"Let's get a bit of rest."

"Really?"

Volk and Darelyn sat down in some chairs. Everywhere there were works of art. The air breezed by bring with it petals. A fountain was pouring in the distance. The droplets were glistening from the sunlight. Volk clenched his fist.

"I'm sorry."

"What?"

"To think this is what has become of our honeymoon..."

"I'm fine. This trip is perfectly alright."

Darelyn slightly leaned her head against Volk's shoulder.

When the two of them married, they did not have much money. They were barely able to raise enough for the ceremony. They weren't able to have a grand wedding, but he wanted them to at least have a honeymoon. However, he was ashamed.

Together they had wandered the Versailles Continent.

They went around dangerous dungeons and friendly villages.

But it did not satisfy his desire to take her on a honeymoon.

There were actually couples that went to the Versailles Continent for honeymoons. As a young couple, they did not have the kind of money to go to a travel agency.

They were tricked by the Exploration of the Versailles Continent Travel Agency. It was targeted towards players of Royal Road. It wasn't fitting to go to the danger zones together for a honeymoon.

It had been three years since the release of Royal Road and the Versailles Continent was constantly changing.

Commercials have been rapidly developing for the recreational purposes and tourism. Now tourists were visiting places in large numbers.

They were able to go see nature freely without the limits of reality!

People were going for relaxation.

In this time, travel agencies were competitively developing the continent as a scenic oasis.

Royal Road led to a great change in business.

A number of meetings and presentations took place in Royal Road.

Salesmen would invite customers in Royal Road.

It was an entertaining way to open up customers with a meal and beverage.

The Versailles Continent was an effective means of getting money out of consumers.

A new world in a land of monsters.

A world defined by magic and strength!

Items gotten from hunting monsters could be given as gifts.

A secure measure in contrast to real life.

Some still might not be impressed.

Gifts in Royal Road was not like getting a luxury car in real life as a bribe.

Receiving gifts in Royal Road was something that could be accepted gratefully.

Bribes were more tempting for people that were lower levels since it visibly rose their stats.

One of the best things about Royal Road was that you could move your body as you wanted. They could beat up monsters solely for the sake of pleasure!

Salesmen found several ways to bait in customers.

As a result, there was no salesperson that didn't use Royal Road to promote their products.

Royal Road had much influence on the marriage industry.

Young men and women were very attracted to adventure.

The things that were possible in reality were also possible in Royal Road.

It was easier to get to know someone and get used to them through adventuring.

Royal Road had a tremendous effect of the couple industry.

Volk and Darelyn had a similar experience.

At first, it was only a one side crush that Volk had but it grew through adventuring and hunting. Soon love blossomed and they got married. They were recognized as a lovely couple. Women found it hard to hate a man that was constantly dedicated to

protecting them.

'I'm glad that you picked me'

Volk patted Darelyn's head.

"Are you comfortable?"

"Yea."

Darelyn put herself deeper into Volk's arms. She wrapped her arms around his waist as if she was clinging to him for warmth.

Suddenly Volk said.

"Do you remember that wooden bouquet that I gave you?"

"Of course, there's no way I could forget the bouquet that you proposed to me with."

Darelyn still had the bouquet. She had gotten a diamond ring in reality but she could never forget the bouquet that she was proposed to with.

"I couldn't prepare a better gift since I didn't have much money and now it's the one year anniversary of our marriage."

"The bouquet was enough. But..."

"But what? Is there anything else that you wanted?"

Volk was curious and asked her. If she wanted anything he would get it for her.

"Rather than a bouquet, I would have wanted a sculpture of the two of us. Even though we are one, we are also two."

"Honey!"

Volk and Darelyn were thrilled with each other. They were looking at each other with the sweet eyes of a couple!

That was why the Dark Gamers deliberately didn't invite them out for drinks.

Then Volk said in regretfully.

"I couldn't find the sculptor who carved the bouquet though."

"He wasn't in Rosenheim?"

"He already left Serabourg. By the time I proposed to you, he was long gone and my attempts to find him were useless. I tried to finally track him down at the Pyramid and Lion Sculpture after I

confessed to you but I could not find him."

"I heard that rumor, that the sculptor that made the pyramid was the one that made my bouquet."

"He was the best sculptor that I knew."

"It's too bad. I would be surprised if you were able to meet him again."

"Me too. But I think that he and I have a special connection that will bring us back together. Just like you and I."

"Maybe you're right."

Volk and Darelyn were talking fondly to each other, right in front of Weed selling his mountain of weapons and armors.

"Selling high durability swords! You will not need to repair often! Selling leather armors! High quality and good defense! If you want, I can custom make leather clothing on the spot!"

Darelyn asked Volk.

"What was the sculptor like?"

"Well, he was stubborn in his own way. He would do anything to

make money selling sculptures. It's not a very good class."

"Like that guy?"

Darelyn pointed to Weed.

He was in the middle of selling stuff. Shining bright swords and glistening leather armor! He had used his ironing skill and sharpening skill. He had put the best goods up for sale and increase the performance of the items with his skills.

"A well sharpened sword is extremely useful for increasing damage by an entire 20% for two days! Two days is more than enough time to kill over 400 monsters! You won't find this opportunity anywhere else! This sword is cheap cheap cheap! Selling swords for as cheap as 120 gold a piece! There is a limited number of 40 of them! If you miss it now, you will never get a sword like this again!"

He was speaking rapidly and clearly.

An active way of attracting customers.

The absolute power of the sword grind skill! It was an exclusive sale for luxury swords!

People were flocking around Weed.

Volk slapped his knee.

"Yea, just like him! He's doing quite well. It takes effort like that to be like the other man."

"Yea, how did you meet him?"

"In the Rosenheim Kingdom. People were flocking all over him from the entire town to buy some of his sculptures."

Volk looked at the swords and armors that Weed was selling.

'Meticulous workmanship. These are decent items for beginners.'

Volk had good eyes. He could tell that the armors and swords were well made.

Then he suddenly felt that Weed's face was familiar.

"You're kidding me... It's the sculptor?"

"Is it?"

Volk shook his head.

"No. There's no way I could meet him in a place like this."

Volk denied that it was Weed after seeing him.

It had been a long time so he couldn't exactly remember the face but the atmosphere that he had was nearly the same.

An elegant method of deception and tricks! The sculptor was unmistakable when he had been selling sculptures. But this person was selling swords and armor and there was no way that a sculptor could be a blacksmith and a tailor.

'The point is that it's not the same person.'

Chapter 4: Northern Expedition

Weed disposed of all the swords and armors. Because the items were popular it did not take long to sell them all.

‘I earned about 7400 gold.’

Accumulating money into his pocket!

That was the meaning that Weed had in life.

Weed got up and headed to the artists guild.

A middle aged man jumped up to greet him.

“I’m shocked! That is amazing. Rumors have already spread all over Rhodium. You created such an outstanding sculpture with your excellent dexterity. Your work will inspire endless possibilities for the artists of Rhodium.”

Because Weed was a combination of a number of professions, he was someone that the middle aged man could admire.

So far that was fine.

That much he had expected from having completed the quest.

The middle aged man grabbed Weed's hands.

“This is the time that I have been waiting for.”

“...?”

“Did you know about the current state of those of the artisan profession in Rhodium and how that the poverty in Rhodium is constantly on the rise?”

“Well, a little...”

“That had not always been the way it was. Artists with great aesthetic senses had created delicate works that were praised by many. The city was filled with art and music, nobody went hungry, and it seemed like there was never a dull moment.”

He began to feel a little nervous.

‘I don't like where this conversation is going.’

A city of people going hungry and increasing amount of restlessness.

He was going to tell him something absurdly bad.

Then he had a premonition of what it was.

Without a surprise, the middle aged man smiled widely and said rather forcefully.

“This is because the city doesn’t have a ruler! A city ruled by a great artisan can grow infinitely. As a talented artist, please become the ruler of Rhodium and guide us!”

Ttiring!

Proposal to become the Ruler of Rhodium, the city of artists.

Rhodium currently does not have a ruler.

This position can be received by an artist that creates an overly superior work in the city of Rhodium.

Do you wish to become the ruler of Rhodium?

You will be given ownership of soldiers and public facilities as well as capable of setting laws and policies.

Taxes on harvest, technology and commercial goods can be collected monthly and military power can be strengthened. A higher position and other rewards can be provided if you successfully conquer another territory or castle of a certain size.

Do you accept?

“Do I accept....”

Owning a city or castle is a very attractive proposition nowadays.

Weed almost accepted it. But then it came to his mind.

‘Nobody has become the ruler of Rhodium!’

He had to check the situation.

Weed’s eyes lit up as he sharpened his gaze.

“What is the monthly deficit?”

“ ... ”

“Number of soldiers?”

“ ... ”

“What is the city’s current technological development and specialty goods?”

“ ... ”

The middle aged man answered none of them.

This meant that Rhodium had a rather large deficit and no income coming in.

Many different possibilities flashed through Weed's mind. Then his thoughts cleared.

“As a sculptor, it is my quest to seek out beauty. I heard that this place was the first step to that path. It would be unreasonable for me to settle down when I constantly need to travel to infinitely long distances.

You have refused to become the ruler of Rhodium.

The middle aged man's lamented.

“It can't be helped if that's how you feel. Leading a city is important, but so is finding the true nature of art.”

Weed was able to avert the crisis.

Weed asked.

“In fact, as a sculptor, I have been led to Rhodium to find something.”

“What are you looking for? Are you talking about a sculpture?”

Weed shook his head.

“A good sculpture would give me inspiration. However, I seek to learn about moonlight sculpting.”

“Moonlight sculpting!”

“Do you know about it?”

The middle aged man looked up to the ceiling as if to recall something.

“Only a handful of great artisans have managed to learn that technique.”

“How do I learn it?”

“I do not know how...but I can tell you the direction you need to take. The Legendary Moonlight Sculptor! Ask the guilds of Rhodium about moonlight sculpting . You will be able to get sufficient information from the Sculpting Guild.”

Ttiring!

The Secret to Moonlight Sculpting

Sculpting for distinguished sculptors!

At the present, many do not know about the existence of moonlight sculptors and even the few that do know only know a little. Ask around the guilds of Rhodium about Moonlight Sculpting. Then go to the Sculpting Guild to learn more about moonlight sculpting.

Difficulty : Occupation related quest.

Restrictions:

Limited to Sculptors.

Can be acquired regardless of the number of quests currently being performed.

Advanced sculpting required to learn. Stats and fame need to be above a certain level.

Unable to do the quest if the art stat is very low or if the user is infamous.

Weed left the Artists Guild and went to the other guilds. There were a lot of people everywhere and it was very crowded.

“Recruiting artists to join the Northern Expedition!”

“The Cold Roses Guild will ensure your safety. Even to the end, we will try to keep the artists from getting annihilated.”

The Cold Roses Guild was trying to recruit artists and production classes.

‘Northern Expedition.’

Weed recalled in the past where he had hunted in Morata Province. He had been risking his life to fight against the True Blood Vampires!

Then two women clung onto him.

“Are you going to go?”

“You just came from the artists guild right?”

“That’s...”

Weed tried to get away but the girls were holding onto both of his arms.

“You want to come with us to the northern expedition right? Traveling around is the fate of artists after all.”

“Adventure and opportunity! You can go and explore the world. There are a lot of high level people in the guild so you can get to expand the number of people you know.”

The two women were acting exceptionally intimate.

It was the first time that Weed experienced something like this before. He was used to Irene and Hwaryeong who liked the murderous Karichwi had

Weed trembled at the soft feel of the girls' skin on his forearm.

It was an unusual feeling.

He had been single for over 20 years of his life and it was the first time that that he felt like this.

“Are you going to the north?”

“Uhh.”

“Don’t look so worried. It’ll ruin your looks.”

“...”

“It’s a lot easier than you think. It’s an opportunity. What profession do you have?”

“Sculptor.”

Weed gave his answer. The feeling of them touching his forearm disappeared.

The girls looked at Weed after he answered them.

“A sculptor...”

“We already have three of them and one of them is close to the intermediate level.”

“Man, we don’t need anymore sculptors.”

“I wasted my time in vain.”

They took their hands off of Weed.

They thought that they might get a good artist when they saw Weed. He had the appearance of a typical artist.

Poor, hunched over, and destitute!

The girls walked away quickly.

“Have a nice adventure.”

“Try to make a lot of pretty sculptures.”

Weed was left alone on the street. Then he went over to the artists guilds.

Weed went to all of the top artists guilds in town.

The place filled with musicians and performers. The Bard's Guild!

The guild was very crowded. The number of beginner bards was astounding.

“This is a nice place.”

Weed thought as he looked inside the place.

Unlike other guilds, the bards guild was decorated like a bar.

Young bards dreamed of traveling and singing in the middle of adventures.

La. Lalala. Lala.

The instrument and songs were not accompanied by lyrics but rather there were clear sounds.

“Well played!.”

“One more song!

“A very clear voice.”

They were playing to guests in hopes of receiving money.

Depending on the crowd’s reaction, they could get a lot of money and some fame.

There was a very minimum requirement. A certain level of singing skills.

The higher the skill level, the more effects are given when playing a song. It was an added bonus if they had a beautiful face, a nice body, and high attractiveness stat.

For bards, attractiveness was an important stat.

Looking prettier was a good thing and needless to say it was important to please the crowd.

For these reasons, Bards were often good looking men and women.

Oh, baby you're not dreaming

I'm right here

Because I'm in front of you singing right here.

A little girl began to sing in the middle of the song. Even bards basically needed a certain amount of singing and playing skills. In Royal Road, almost everything depended on skill.

They must know how to act and move their bodies. Furthermore, they must know about art!

Weed left the first floor and headed to the second floor.

The bard instructor was a beautiful woman. She had a slender figure and a thin jaw line. Because of this, many men became bards.

A lot of the popular professions were the ones that allowed men to go on adventures with women.

Weed of course was attracted to her looks.

But he had already seen extremely beautiful women like Hwaryeong and Seoyoon.

He waited until it was his turn, and then he asked the instructor.

“I would like to know about moonlight sculpting.”

Serena, the instructor smiled softly.

“Moonlight Sculpting? I haven’t heard that for a very long time. But there is no obligation for the Bard’s Guild to answer you.”

Weed looked at Serena very quickly.

“You are very beautiful.”

“You need more than that to tempt me. The challenge is over before it even begins. A man of your charm is not enough.”

Weed did not put any stats into attractiveness.

Attractiveness increased luck and appearance as well as reduce the chance of receiving a deadly attack.

It could also minimize the amount of damage received from magic attacks. It increased drop rates a bit as well. It did not apply until the stat was over 200 though.

Thereby, Weed did not invest any points into the stat.

“You have a beautiful singing voice.”

“I’m a bard so that much is obvious.”

“You have very beautiful hands and clear eyes.”

“Hoho. You know how to say some nice things. What were you curious about again?”

Serena’s attractive and shiny eyes flashed.

This was what Weed wanted.

“I would like to know about moonlight sculpting.”

“Okay, would you care for a song first?”

“Of course.”

Serena began to sing with a fine voice while playing a harp.

You've lost hope

A girl waits dreaming at home

You're missing

Fighting any enemy even then do not forget the girl

You sing about her and see her in your dreams

Go to her, the place where you will be happy...

The bard's guild flocked with people as Serena began to sing.

"She's singing."

"How long again did she start?"

"I really like her song."

They sat around admiring her song.

Serena's clear voice brought a soft feeling to his chest.

She closed her eyes as she brought her song to an end.

-You have listened to the song of the returned soldier.

Fighting spirit has increased by 10%.

Intellect has increased by 5%.

Endurance increases when vitality drops lower.

Last for three days. Does not overlap with other bard's songs.

A long time after the song Serena asked Weed.

“How did you like my song?”

“It was very pleasing to hear.”

Weed did not need to exaggerate and simply gave an honest answer.

It was a really good song. There wasn't a need to think of any flattery.

A compliment straight from the heart!

There was flattery more authentic than the simple truth.

‘It's an easy thing to flatter people. Flatter has its limits. It was really good, so there was no need to say anything else.’

People were jealous of him on the ground level, but at that moment he was also the most respected person in the room. Even the slightest actions, if brilliant, had to be accepted.

It was important to say things casually.

“Serena truly is majestic.”

“There isn’t anything that Serena can’t do.”

“I was surprised that it was such an elegantly flowing song...”

The words left a lingering feeling.

As the words left his mouth, one could only smile from the change in the atmosphere.

The one thing that Weed prided himself in was his flattering abilities.

“Ho, ho, ho.”

Serena laughed with a smile on her face. Weed thought she was satisfied.

“This will be a souvenir of the song.”

“Yes?”

“It’s 1500 gold.”

“That is...”

“If you give me it, I will tell you what you want to know.”

Weed gave her the money with tears in his eyes. The world revolves on money.

Bribes!

Bribes promoted human relations.

Weed examined the item he got after paying a fortune.

“Identify!”

Serena’s Harp

Durability: 50/50 Attack: 15

A harp owned by the instructor of the Bard’s Guild. A dwarf had made it for her.

It produces a clear sound when played.

It is suitable to sing while playing the harp.

Beginners and non-bards can play it.

Limitations: Attractiveness 100 Level 60

Options:

Attractiveness +30

Elegance +20

Playing skills +2

Fame+20

Bard related quests can be performed.

The performance of the harp wasn't that bad.

Serena said as she sold the harp.

“I haven't seen many moonlight sculptures. But every time that I see it, the feeling that it gives off is different. The light that the finished sculpture gives off is different.”

“Yes?”

“Unfortunately there is nothing more for me to say since that is just all I know.”

Weed reluctantly left the Bard’s Guild and went to others.

Hairdresser’s Guild!

It was a rare class that didn’t have many guilds in the Versailles Continent.

You could dye your hair and change your hairstyle.

They were typically classified as artists since it required a certain level of skill for beauty.

Such professions were only popular among a handful of enthusiasts.

As soon as Weed entered the Hairdressers Guild, the instructor seized him and threw him into a chair.

“Too bad there isn’t more hair. Don’t worry about it. I’ll give you a pretty cut.”

“I don’t want a haircut...it’s nothing. I would like to get a haircut. What is the price?”

Weed was pretty much forced to pay to have his hair cut.

-The art stat has temporarily increased by 3% and has various effects on a variety of production skills. Not applicable to sculpting.

-Attractiveness has increased by 5% for three days.

The instructor told him after he finished cutting the hair.

“I’ve never directly seen Moonlight Sculpting. But it’s not that I’ve never heard of it. Do you know the history of sculpting? Sculpting has historically been striving to develop. As I said, it’s related to history.”

Dancers have fine appearances and sensual bodies.

After the Hairdresser Guild, he visited the dancer’s guild and danced with the instructor.

“The foot goes here...then a quarter turn.”

Weed’s dance lessons cost him 80 gold.

-Agility has increased by 2%. Upon death or when the body is fatigued then the agility will return to normal.

-The pleasurable dancing has increased attractiveness by 1.

Attractiveness and agility increased after dancing with the instructor.

“I’ve once danced underneath some moonlight sculptures. My body felt very light. For some reason, I could dance better after I saw the sculpture. Maybe I am mistaken.”

Weed could kind of understand the quest.

‘It’s to experience a wide variety of different types of art forms.’

It could not be ignored that a large amount of money was consumed in the process.

Weed had to buy three of the best cheapest perfume from the perfume instructor.

In return he got to hear a story from the instructor.

“The angle at which you view the sculpture changes the feeling it gives. Those feeling arouse different types of emotions. But even if someone saw the same sculpture in the same direction but at a different time of day then it was different. Would you like to know why?”

Weed visited the Calligraphy Guild, the Antiques Appraiser Guild, and the Crafts Guild. A mountain of items were

accumulating in his backpack.

Calligraphers wanted him to buy wooden plaques with letters on them while appraisers wanted him to buy pots with unknown origins. The Crafts Guild made him buy glass accessories.

He could not bear to go see the Architect Guild.

‘It costs too much to buy a house.’

Weed confidently went to the painters guild.

At a first glance sculptors and painters were similar, but the methods that they used pursued their means were completely different.

Because of that they were forced to know about each other.

The painting instructor was amazed when he saw Weed.

“The man with amazing artistic ability! What questions do you have?”

“I would like to know about moonlight sculpting.”

“Moonlight sculpting...I think I have heard of one such story before. Painters create two dimensional art while sculptures create

three dimensional art. In the past, there was a competition between the two. Have you heard of it?”

“A competition?”

“It was to produce one lion. They both equally expressed the lion’s strength and majesty.”

“I wonder who won then?”

Weed hoped the sculptor won.

He did not choose to become a sculptor, but he would be pretty angry if the painter won.

“The painter painted and the sculptor cut away. Vibrant pictures showed up on the canvas from the painter while the sculptor made a beautiful sculpture. In the end, no one won. It was useless to compare sculptors and painters because of the fundamental differences between the two as it had always been in the past. It only served to blur the distinction between the two.”

What the painter said made sense. Then he came to his purpose.

“Painters and sculptors do not have to be so estranged. This is my most favorite, favorite painting...”

It was a very large watercolor painting.

Weed asked with tears in his eyes.

“May I ask that you price it reasonably?”

“I’m willing to give it up to you for 1500 gold.”

Weed paid for it with trembling hands.

‘I will never come back to Rhodium.’

He only had 7000 left of his original gold. Even though he had saved up his money without any spending it, he now ended up poor.

But thanks to it he was able to hear about moonlight sculpting.

“Sculptures exist depending on the environment and the nature of the location. If you make a sculpture in a dark place, then the sculpture will also be dark. But what would happen if the sculpture glows?”

“Do you mean as in light?”

“These sculptures can radiate light. This sculpting gives the user the ability to freely control light. That is moonlight sculpting!”

Ttiring!

- You have gathered all the information about moonlight sculpting. Go to the Sculptor's guild instructor.

Weed headed to the Sculptor's Guild. Surprisingly there was a large number of people gathered.

Chattering

“Rather than plain wood, high quality patterned wood seems to be better for making artistic sculptures.”

“I'm certain that rare trees give more proficiency.

Novice sculptors!

Because of Weed's actions in the Kingdom of Rosenheim, more people began to choose sculptors. In other places it was hard to be a sculptor. That was why there were a lot of sculptors in Rhodium.

Information exchanges about sculpting development was taking place.

Weed walked up to the second floor.

The first floor instructor knew how to deal with basic sculpting.

How to cut wood, how to make shapes, how to use a carving knife, and other basic knowledge.

However, the second floor instructor gave special quests and skills information.

Weed went up to the receptionist on the second floor.

“I wish to learn moonlight sculpting.”

The elderly receptionist blinked.

“What sculpting?”

“Moonlight sculpting.”

“Have I heard of moonlight sculpting? I’m old so I can’t really remember. I don’t think I have possibly heard about it?”

The elderly receptionist looked like he had no idea.

“There is however a person that introduces people to create sculptures and is more knowledgeable about such things than me in Rhodium.”

“Who is he?”

The old man pointed to a middle aged man in the corner.

“He’s Rhodium’s finest sculptor so he’s the one you need to ask about sculptor related questions. But you must have a modest sculpting level or he will not be willing to talk to you.”

“Thank you.”

Weed went up to the sculptor. He had a carving knife and was making a wood sculpture.

“Nowadays its a problem that young people have no patience. Patience is unrivaled. Patience! When things start to hurt a little or get annoying they give up and they can’t taste the pleasure of fine sculpting? Ah, tsk tsk!”

The mumbling continued endlessly.

That was probably because a large number of people started choosing sculptor recently without knowing about the hardships it entails. The sculptor poured out stirred and disinterested complaints. He tended to not raise his head when others came near.

Weed immediately initiated his flattery.

“You’re an excellent sculptor.”

“I hear that alot. I’m sick and tired of hearing it.”

For a sculptor that was the best compliment but he did not even budge.

Weed looked at the shape of the wood in his hands.

“Elven elkwood..”

“Whoa! It appears you have traveled around and learned a little bit about sculpting.”

The sculptors desires was hidden in his way of speaking. Still, the sculptor was concentrated on his work and didn’t look up.

‘Maybe it wasn’t good enough?’

Weed looked closely at the wood he was using. He had tried using the material several times. It was a bit expensive. It was also thick and hard.

‘The material itself isn’t much.’

The elven elkwood was rounded by the sculptor to make a bowl.

“In this world things need forms.”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“Aren’t there people out there that would rather make a commodities than works of art?”

“Then you consider this bowl I sculpted to be trivial?”

“Not at all. What I am thinking are original sculptures. Art came about to fit human needs.”

“It looks like you wish to know something. Come and sit down.”

The sculptor willing gave up the seat next to him.

People with high pride are often not given enough recognition in the art world.

Art from the beginning did not start as art. Painting, music, and sculpting began depending on need and then sublimated into art. At the heart of it was its application.

Weed knew what to say and that created the right level of intimacy with the sculptor.

But that was natural for Weed.

He saved quite a bit of money by carving his own cooking tools.

Stone table, wooden spatula, and frying pan! He even sculpting a barrel for seasonings. Weed beckoned the sculptor to take a short break.

“It seems that you and I can have a conversation. Since we are colleagues walking down the same road after all.”

“Thank you. I wish to ask you a question about sculpting.”

Weed politely asked the sculptor who readily answered.

“What is it that you wish to know about sculpting?”

“Do you know about moonlight sculpting?”

“Moonlight sculpting? Those that reach the pinnacle of earthly sculpting can learn light sculpting. People tend not to believe. It is an impractical story.”

“Impractical story?”

“Yea, it is one from sculpting...if you want to learn moonlight sculpting then you need to know its origins. Here take this.”

The sculptor reached into his bag and pulled out an ore and gave it to Weed.

“It’s hard to cut precious ore to make sculptures. It is not easy to shape ore. There is a large risk and it dulls hundreds of carving knives. However, if you wish to learn about moonlight sculpting then you need to make light on your own.”

Ttiring!

Find the Lost Light.

Light sculpting.

Cut down ore to make a sculpture.

The lost art of Moonlight sculpting can be learned.

Difficulty: Profession related quest.

Restriction:

Sculptor only.

Quest can be accepted regardless of the number of quests in progress. Advanced sculpting required.

Fame and stats must be above a certain level. Quest can not be done if art is low or if the player is infamous.

Essentially he had to learn it himself. He needed to learn how to perform Moonlight Sculpting on his own. That was the last trial to learn moonlight sculpting by carving this ore.

Chapter 5: Moonlight Sculpting

Since he was finished with his business in Rhodium, Weed went to the Church of Freya. Freya was the symbol of abundance and prosperity so Rhodium had a very large temple.

The reason that Weed returned to the Church of Freya was because, due to his contributions in returning the holy relics, he was free to use any of the teleport circles in any of their churches in the Versailles Continent.

“We are humbled to welcome you. Great benefactor of our church.”

Weed was welcomed by the senior priests.

“I wish to use the teleport gate.”

“As you wish. We will begin the preparations. However, are you aware that the High Priest has been requesting to see you?”

“The High Priest?”

Weed was puzzled. The quest was already finished once he returned in the Herrera Grail. He could not find a reason for the High Priest wanting to see him.

“Do you know what has happened?”

“The High Priest said that you have to search the Valley of Death to find clues to restore the honor of king who is buried there.”

“What do you mean the king’s honor...?”

“The royalists have been accused and insulted because of what happened to their king so the High Priest want a great adventurer like Weed nim to obtain the truth and restore the king’s honor.”

“I am not such a great adventurer.”

“It seems that the High Priest thinks otherwise. Also since Weed nim has already been to the north once, it is better to have someone who already has experience in the area to go.”

Weed could guess what kind of quest this once from the description.

‘It’s going to be at least an A rank quest.’

The High Priest was waiting to give him another great quest like the one to defeat the Immortal Legion.

‘The quest of this level. It was pretty bad when I fought against the Legions of Undead. Even if I’m higher level and I’ve slowly increased by sculpting skill.’

Weed immediately shook his head.

“I’m not interested. Please send me to the Plains of Despair instead.”

He needed to get back to his party.

The senior priests gathered their mana to operate the teleport gate.

In Rhodium, the Cold Roses Guild accepted many people into the expedition. A total of 160 people!

Except for about 30 artisans, roughly 120 people were combat type classes.

“This will not guarantee success since this is going to be a difficult adventure and everyone has to be prepared.”

Oberon clicked his tongue.

No matter what, having novices did not matter. It was more stable if there were only high level users.

Most of these people were obviously going to raise their levels and try to obtain rare items from dangerous hunting grounds.

Drum had a joyful face since he also expected to reap large profits from it.

“It’s going to increase the probability of success isn’t it?”

“Yeah, but the increase of the number of mercenaries in the expedition will also increase fraud.”

“Since it’s going to be difficult, having the mercenaries will be a great help in case of an emergency.”

“The only ones that are going to be of any use are the ones that are more experienced and higher level than the rest of these people.”

All the people joining the Cold Roses Guild brought in a large amount of money. Most were participating simply for the adventure. However, it greatly increased the strength of the expedition.

“But where did these replacements come from?”

Since Oberon was wondering, Kerberos explained.

“Did you know that recently there have been some people that have become quite famous by challenging strong people?”

“Challengers? You mean the people that go around dueling others?”

“That’s right.”

All the Geomchis up to Geomchi505.

Some went to challenge others to duels. Others went to train in the mountains. There wasn’t a need to fight solely against people.

Deep in the mountains there were dangerous monsters, fierce animals, and the trials of nature.

Each of their sword fighting styles were different.

Destructive forces usually depended on the strength stat, agility, and the differences between reaction time.

Nevertheless, they learned various things about the sword.

Their bodies became more attuned to the sword.

They learned how to fight in various situations and how to match their movements with their swords.

The sword is a means for survival!

With a month of beating a scarecrow, they tempered their mastery of the sword.

Many Geomchis had increased their levels through hunting. Among them, several dozen of them joined up with the expedition.

“That’s very good to hear.”

Oberon had a big smile on his face.

It was good to hear that a number of these people were in the expedition and he wanted to meet them.

“Kerberos.”

“Yes leader.”

“Are all the preparations finished?”

“All the supplies have been prepared.”

“How about the teleport circles?”

“They have been drawn. We are ready to go as scheduled.”

“Then in one hour begin to send people. Start with the main vanguard of our forces.”

“Naturally since they will set an example for the rest of the expedition.”

Northern Expedition!

The wizards drew a large circle in the plains. Then the vanguard of the forces stood onto the circle.

There were 150 warriors led by Kerberos! There were also some blacksmiths and architechts.

“I’ll see you in the north.”

“Be careful.”

“Don’t worry, we will set up camp and scout out the surrounding area.”

“We will meet again in eight hours.”

“Yes. I’ll be waiting.”

It could be used three times a day to send about a total of 450 people. Therefore dividing it up into 11 groups in order.

The vanguard’s job was to set up a field of operations and scout

the area.

Oberon needed to signal the start of the expedition.

“Let’s get started. Send them to the north.”

“Teleport!”

The wizards triggered the circle.

They were only able to send people to a designated location rather than where they want to be teleported.

Kerberos and the warriors!

They were the best of the elites in the guild.

They had a curious love for fighting. They would go into dungeons that others would be frightened to even approach.

They closed their eyes and when they opened them the surrounding landscape was entirely different.

It was very cold and the ground was covered in snow.

Thick bluish vapor came out of their mouths.

“Achoo!”

“Why is it so cold?”

The expedition immediately took out their blankets.

They had come prepared. Everyone had laughed at them when they were packing blankets to bring along.

“This is better...”

“I’m just going to cover up in a blanket and fall asleep.”

If they did not have blankets once they came to the Northern Continent then everything would have gone horribly.

Ruruyiiiing!

The cold wind blew past them like blades.

Chatter chatter chatter.

The expedition was frantically chattering their teeth in the cold.

Because of the cold, it was difficult for them to walk much less

scout the area.

“This...we need something to get rid of the cold.”

Kerberos ordered to have a bonfire started. However it was not an easy task since there was hardly any useful firewood on the frozen ground.

The Ras Hill.

In a place that was completely covered in snow it was unlikely that anyone would be able to find anything.

They went to the top of the hill and looked around only to see that they were in the middle of nowhere. There were other things to be worried about besides the cold.

Some distance from there there was a flurry of snow. It slowly raised ice and snow off the ground and sucked up anything in its way. A dance of ice and light. It was an extremely beautiful power of nature. A unique regional characteristic to the north, the storm of ice and snow was approaching.

The boss monsters of the Karaka Forest!

Pale, Zephyr, Hwaryeong, and their party search the entire forest for the King Snake. However, they could not find it.

Geomchi5 saw a tree with some colorful patterns on it.

“That looks like its unique and since Weed makes sculptures so do you think we should take it?”

He thought about it for awhile then he gave up the idea and stopped worrying.

He started moving based on his behavior before thinking anything else.

Profits!

He pulled out the sword and slashed the wood.

However he only cut the surface.

“What is this?”

Geomchi5 saw that it was harder to cut than usual.

Pakakakash.

An insidious sound came from behind as the head of a large snake appeared.

Shururuk!

He caught sight of the King Snake's head as it spit out its two-forked tongue!

“Stupids bastards. You dare to attack my majestic body.”

The King Snake was a named monster.

Since then, the party engaged in battle against the King Snake. It had a body length of over 10 meters and it was capable of moving very quickly.

It was not a possibility to run away from it should it give chase. It hid terrible poisonous vapors in its body as well as very tough skin.

The King Snake's main weapons were its fangs and its poison, which had enough force to break a bull's back.

The incredibly pointed teeth were capable of piercing heavy armors.

In the past they would have never thought of hunting the King Snake. However, now they had more companions and they all had developed a sense for battle.

“Fire Field!”

Romuna set fire to the surrounding area. Snakes hate fire!

It was not a direct attack on the King Snake but it reduced its range of movement. But because of this the party suffered damage.

“Please protect us from the blazing fires. Blessing of Water. Kyaaaaaa its hot.”

Irene screamed.

Her main role was restoring health. Her defensive and blessing skills were a little lacking.

Because her Blessing of Water skill had low skill mastery it was helpless before Romuna’s fire.

Since it failed, Irene focused on healing the party’s health using holy magic.

Zephyr took the role of baiting and luring the King Snake while Hwaryeong danced.

“Dance of Confusion!”

The dance was capable of lowering the enemy’s spirit and breaking their balance. In a sense it was a dance that was suitable for combat since it disrupts the enemy’s balance and does not revert to normal.

It was a powerful sort of curse.

The snake began to have irregular behavior as Hwayrung danced.

Her face seemed to indicate as if she was caged inside a chaotic maze as she danced.

These dances were not part of the dancer's skills.

It was because Hwaryeong's dancing that such a skill was possible.

The dance increased the effects of the skill even more.

“Oh, Hwaryeong is dancing.”

“It's a very beautiful dance.”

“Beautiful is not enough to express it...”

“She has such a slim waist and graceful neck...”

Geomchi₂, Geomchi₃, Geomchi₄, and Geomchi₅ found it hard to not watch Hwaryeong dance.

Battle or not, all of their attention was devoted to Hwaryeong's dancing.

“Keoheom!”

They were in the back modestly watching her dance. Men did not change no matter how much time passes. There was a spoonful of truth in the superstitions that women have for men.

Chururaah!

The King Snake moved its big long head side to side along the floor. Then it spread its blue poison out. Others would usually instinctively fall into chaos rather than fight and protect themselves.

“Poison Cure!”

Irene was in the middle and she dispelled the poison.

“It’s time for our part.”

“Yes Master.”

Geomchi, Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 rushed along an open path and slashed at the enemy’s body.

“Ice Blade!”

“River Sword.”

“Revenge Slash!”

Geomchi, Geomchi², Geomchi³, Geomchi⁴, and Geomchi⁵ cast their skills.

Because the King Snake’s body was so thick, the skills did not inflict that much damage.

The other practitioners tended to limit their use of skills but there were some exceptions.

Most of the time, a monster’s behavior and response changes before a skill can even be used.

It was easier to take advantage of an enemy with a sword rather than using a skill.

‘Use the skills! Concentrate your force! The damage will gradually build up.’

‘Feel the use of the skills. Use the skills continuously and destroy the enemy weak points. With each blow our strikes get stronger!’

With certain skills they were able to increase their damage output and reach new heights in their ability. Their skill proficiency was much higher than their levels.

Stats were not the only thing that increased attack strength and more damage could be inflicted if one knew how to fight properly.

The sound of Geomchi, Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 yelling out their skills could be heard.

“Slice and Dice!”

A fierce attack harnessing rapid movement!

The muscular Geom4chi's was moving his sword so fast that it looked like there were tens of swords.

“Double Strike!”

Surka hit the King Snake's torso with great force. Her sharp knuckles gave blows to the King Snake's tough leather.

The damage they were dealing was small, but with the Geomchis they were able to finish off the King Snake after a great struggle.

Since hunting the King Snake was so tough, they to head back to the Castle of the Dark Elves.

Weed went back to the Plains of Despair and started running to the Castle of the Dark Elves once the party finished conquering the Karaka Forest and they took a break. A little later Maylon showed up and they started talking.

Then in the middle of the conversation Maylon said.

“Pale nim.”

“Yes?”

“Do you know what today is?”

“I don’t know. Is it because its been 64 days since we first met?”

“Today they gave me a day off from work.”

Maylon was speaking in a coy tone!

The only ones that could hear it was those two.

Pale nodded without hesitation.

“I’m looking forward to seeing the concert.”

“I’ll take you this evening.”

Pale and Maylon quickly arranged a date.

Romuna and Irene looked as if their stomachs were in pain.

“It feels like Pale has become a different person.”

“As a friend and a fellow man, I approve.”

Geomchi, Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 watched the couple.

They understood that women liked strong and reliable men. They had good bodies and they could fight well. However they could not get any women.

‘Why is that?’

‘Is it that women don’t like muscle?’

‘Exercise and mixed martial arts seem to be a good thing though...’

The Geomchis thought that being muscular was exciting and attractive.

But in reality they were unable to get any women.

In order to maintain their bodies to the best physical condition in real life they mainly ate chicken and protein. There were no seasonings nor condiments but they simply ate boiled chicken with rice! Sometimes the chicken would have a strange fishy smell. Sometimes it was hard to chew.

It was natural for them to eat their meals this way.

‘Have to watch what we eat.’

‘We have to eat to be strong.’

They forced themselves not to eat other foods and only eat lean chicken breast.

The problem was egg whites.

They would eat dozens of boiled eggs until they went mad. It was so appalling that they would get sick from the smell of it.

They needed to digest a lot of food because they needed large amounts of protein.

They were also troubled with the level of water in their bodies.

They tried their bests to supplement replenish their bodies and stamina whenever they exercise a lot.

Many of the other also went through such challenges for thorough self-management from living through the sword. Thanks to that, they did not have the chance to ever meet any women.

Surka suddenly said.

“Since we’re all talking about this, why don’t we meet up in real life?”

“What?”

“We can meet up with each other and talk this way in reality! Why don’t we all go to the concert together?”

“I’m not sure if that’s a good idea.”

“Why not. Seeing each other for real would be great.”

Meeting in real life.

Maylon, Irene, Surka, Romuna, and Hwaryeong!

The Geomchis were going to get to meet as many as five women. It was a rare opportunity to talk with women even if Surka was too young and Maylon had a boyfriend.

Drinking coffee and eating hamburgers.

Just walking around the city with women would be pleasant.

Geomchi₄ and Geomchi₅ looked at each other.”

“Geom₄chi.”

“Yes, Geomchi₅.”

“Have you ever been to a concert before?”

“The last time I went was probably six years ago.”

“...”

“I want to go this time.”

Maylon and Pale was against it since they didn’t expect to have anyone else get in the way of their quality time.

Aside from that, Zephyr and Hwaryeong were relatively friendly with the Geomchis.

Also meeting up and talking in real life was a good way to pass time.

Needless to say, Irene and Romuna approved.

“Sounds good.”

“I haven’t seen a concert in a while.”

“Hwaryeong-unnie is it okay if we meet up?”

Surka went up and nodded her head at Hwaryeong.

“Yea, I would like to meet up.”

The fact was that Hwaryeong was a little reluctant to meet up with people. She didn’t want people to know in game that she was a celebrity.

‘But I’ll be fine with these people.’

Since she got Hwaryeong's approval, Surka asked Zephyr.

“Is Zephyr-oppa coming?”

“Of course.”

Zephyr was also a little hesitant.

His family's company made millions overnight.

He would only need to talk to strangers for 3 to 6 minutes to get their contact information.

This legendary playboy would go out at times for 30 minute dates.

Because of this, Zephyr was awkward to accepting interpersonal relationships.

However, the time that they had spent together in game was not for nothing.

It was then that Weed arrived in the Castle of the Dark Elves.

“So everyone's here.”

Except for Mapan, who was busy, all the companions were united.

Wasting no time, Surka walked over to Weed with bright eyes and asked.

“Weed! Weed oppa!”

“Huh?”

“We want to meet in real life. Zephyr oppa, Hwaryeong unnie, Irene unnie, Romuna unnie, Pale oppa, and Maylon unnie as well. Oppa I want to meet up with you and see a concert. What do you think?”

“ ... ”

Weed was half-hearted about it.

‘A concert...tickets for them are expensive.’

Weed hated spending money on cultural activities.

To him, culture was unknown.

Weed didn’t think that culture was great performances, theaters, or exhibitions.

To him, it was enough to use a magnifying glass and look and play with ants. He also planted vegetables in his free time. There was a difference between organic vegetables and market vegetables so he tried to save money.

There was also house cleaning and washing the dishes.

An infinite amount of labor.

In contrast culture was only about consumption.

Money money money!

No matter what you are going to do or eat, it will cost money.

Weed ran a strict household budget.

For one month, he had an allowance of 2000 won.

That was the amount set aside from food for entertainment.

Weed was going to refuse.

But then it would be difficult for him if they all meet except for him.

Then Geomchi⁵ went ahead and spoke for Weed.

“Weed is a busy person, we can’t force someone as busy as him to come.”

Geomchi⁴ also nodded.

“Yea. I’m certain that Weed has a lot of work to do and I would be surprised if he had any free time.”

They gave a strong defense in Weed’s favor. But Hwaryeong opened her mouth to speak her slight disappointment.

“If Weed’s not coming then I don’t want to go.”

Irene and Romuna were also inclined.

“I don’t think it’s going to be fun if Weed’s not there.”

“For a concert, I think its more meaningful if we all go together than if we simply go by ourselves.”

Zephyr said leaning his fishing rod against his shoulder.

“If Weed’s not going then I don’t need to come. I would rather spend my time doing something else then.”

At that point, they changed their minds to meet up in real life.

If Weed, who was at the center of their group, wasn’t going then they weren’t either.

If Weed didn’t go, then it wouldn’t be fun. That was how much of a role Weed had.

Geomchi2 quickly tried to change the subject.

“Weed, I don’t think that it would be too much trouble to meet up.”

“Don’t you come by daily to train at the dojo?”

“Ah! That’s right, that is how it is.”

Geomchi5 also entered into the conversation.

“It’s a good chance to immerse ourselves in some classical tunes. Passionate music.”

Geomchi4 grinned as well.

“Like a real man! Friendly companionship! This much is obvious.”

Geomchi2, Geomchi4, Geomchi5, Pale, Hwaryeong, and Irene were all encouraging him to go.

He noticed that they really wanted to meet up.

It would be really embarrassing if he refused now.

“Okay. Will three days from now be fine?”

“Maybe...it should be.”

Pale peeked over at Geomchi2 who nodded his head.

“So until then, let’s go hunt in a dungeon.”

“Dungeon?”

“I meant three days in real life. So if we start hunting now, it will be about 8 days in the Versailles Continent. With that much time, we can fully explore and clear out a dungeon. Is that alright with you?”

Surka thought about Weed’s claim.

“Are we even able to clear a dungeon in eight days? I’m with Weed oppa.”

Maylon shook her head as if she was hearing nonsense.

‘Any decent dungeon would take at least a fortnight. It would take at least 10 days to map out the dungeon as well. Eight days is just ridiculous.’

But Maylon did not understand. The very moment that Weed

said it, Hwaryeong and Zephyr started shaking their legs.

Of course this was because they remembered their memories of hunting with Weed in the Basra Caverns.

‘Geuak...’

‘Endless hunting...’

‘Eat, hunt, get bandaged...’

‘Then more hunting. It would be less trouble to just die!’

Hunting for 29 hours without rest. It was their first experience doing such a thing. They hit their physical and mental limits fighting monsters to such an extent.

Then they went back to town to sell the japtem.

They thought that it was the end.

Only to return back to level for a few more days...

Now the grueling hunt was going to be resurrected.

You are the first person to discover the Rotten Lich’s Dungeon!

Reward:

Fame has increased by 400.

Experience and drop rates have doubled for a week.

The first monster hunted will drop some its the best items it has.

Chapter 6: Hollow Dungeon!

Weed and his companions went to the area where they had hunted the King Snake.

They were the first ones to discover the dungeon.

At the entrance of the cave, Weed collected all the weapons and armor to use his skills on them.

“Sword grind, armor polish, iron clothes!”

Production skill side effects!

Before entering the dungeon, everyone ate food until they were satisfied.

The effects were higher than those of a bard's and a shaman's blessings combined.

Thanks to his superior handicrafting, it gave quite a few advantages to his skills and thus did not require them to repair their equipment that frequently.

“From here on it will be nothing but fierce hunting.”

Surka stretched out her hands.

“This time we need to get to at least level 300.”

Pale had become level 296 thanks to their frequent hunting.

Romuna, Surka, and Irene were also similarly leveled.

But his girlfriend Maylon was already level 310. Isn't it something all men have in common to want to be strong in front of their girlfriends!

‘Get stronger.’

Pale did not spend all his time hunting like Maylon.

He spent more time increasing his archery masteries. While training his character, he focused on raising his skills and masteries.

The advice from the Geomchis had been a great help to him.

With a bow and arrow, he had to suppress the urge to simply shoot at the monster's body.

He had to look for the brief moments to attack the enemy's weaknesses!

If you shot an arrow at the same time a sword struck the enemy then the damage from it would be higher than usual.

It was time to show off his skills to Maylon.

At the entrance of the cave were Skeleton Knights. They were some of the monsters that went around patrolling areas.

“Li...life.”

“”Those are...living things....die!”

Skeleton Knights.

Three Skeleton Knights riding on ghostly Phantom Horses came charging.

Neiiighhhh!

The eerie cries of the ghost horses.

“Fire Fist!”

Surka jumped to the front and shot out blazing flames.

It collided with the Skeleton Knights.

Weed had been worried that it would be unreasonable to have Surka fight if she was underpowered. Apparently his worries had not been of any real concern.

Surka charge into the Skeleton Knights and then circled around.

“Strike! Yonhankwan!”

She had rushed to the rear to strike the Skeleton Knights from behind.

“Ah ha!”

Weed admired her a little.

In a fight against an enemy it doesn't help to just have a more flexible body.

You have to move around naturally and avoid the enemy's attacks.

It takes quick judgement and fast reflexes to succeed at such a tough feat.

Good use of close range skills could be used to slaughter enemies in ways that long range couldn't.

But that didn't mean that clerics and wizards didn't have an important role.

However, Surka had very good judgement.

She had rushed ahead of the Skeleton Knight's attack to reduce the damage she took, allowing her to prevent further enemy attacks and strike in the enemy's blind zone.

Surka rotated her body to strike the Skeleton Knight.

Her companions were not idle.

Pale and Maylon shot arrows rapidly.

Chashhhak.

Arrows continued to fly ceaselessly.

The arrows flew around Surka and pierced the Skeleton Knight precisely.

"Ga...ga..gahhh!"

The Skeleton Knight was too busy with Surka's attack to avoid the arrows.

Geomchi², Geomchi³, Hwaryeong and Zephyr were responsible for the Skeleton Knight on the left while the one on the right went to Geomchi, Geomchi⁴, and Geomchi⁵.

The Geomchis generously showed off their advanced battle skills to the party.

“I should not be idling.”

Weed took out the Talrock's that he had been saving in his backpack. The lustrous sheen of the armor!

It was nearly white because it had been made mainly of Mithril.

However, this mithril had light absorbing properties. So it was now actually black in color. In fact, in the past most of Weed's armor had been black.

It was finally time to wear something nice!

He rarely changed his armor and usually stuck to repairing and raising his endurance.

But Talrock's armor was black and expensive looking.

Weed carefully polished it with a cloth.

“Armor Polish.”

Swishswishswish.

It was difficult for him to even touch the rare armor.

It was not just any armor after all. If he were to sell it he would get at least 10 million won.

It was entirely possible to find someone that wanted to own it!

It was one of Weed's treasures.

-The armor has been wiped clean.

Armor defense has increased by 20%.

Weed equipped Talrock's Armor. It was made consisting mainly of mithril and it had the red pattern of the Church of Freya on its chest.

Talrock's Armor has been worn.

Defense has increased by 102.

Faith has increased by 100.

Fame has increased by 300.

Strength has increased by 40.

Agility has increased by 30.

Attractiveness has increased by 25.

Fighting spirit has increased by 40.

Mana has increased by 15%.

Incoming magic damage has decreased by 10%

Fear and confusion magic immunity has been gained.

Relationship among Dwarves have increased.

The gloriousness of unique items!

Hwaryeong could not hide her admiration since she was in the back of the battle.

“That armor looks very pretty.”

Weed was a little disappointed.

‘The options for dancers are useless for battle.’

Irene knew her role in battle as a cleric.

“Get filled up with holes so I can patch you up..”

It was to be expected of Irene after all.

‘Couldn’t she have put it more delicately?’

Weed gave a low sigh and then he took out his sword to join in the battle.

“Sculpting Blade!”

It was a fearsome blade that ignored enemy defense and struck at the body.

Weed struck at the Skeleton Knight with his sword.

It looked as if the enemy froze in place as he unfolded his attacks onto him.

Kakaaang!

The Skull Knight slashed towards Weed with his sword. Weed closed his eyes the moment it struck.

- Cold Eyes skill has been used.

You can not see but pain subsides.

Because of his high endurance stat and his black armor as well as the skill, he did not take that much damage from such a big hit.

“Hu....human open your eyes!”

“I do not want to. I am strong enough to beat you with my eyes closed.”

“Human...what you say...is an insult to me as a knight.”

The Skeleton Knight gained more power through anger.

Undead Frenzy!

It was an ability that increased their power by 10 to 20%.

Every time he got hit by the Skeleton Knight's attack he would close his eyes and then strike back.

The battle then changed up.

The Skeleton Knight started moving his shoulder bones towards Weed.

It was heading towards his arms and wrists.

Then he closed his eyes.

“I guess its coming towards the chest.”

He anticipated the enemy's attack.

That was because it was the only way it could attack.

“Daemon Blade!”

The Skeleton Knight's blade was covered in a devilish shape. It started using skills.

The forces of evil caused the creation of a skill that caused blood to flow from wounds.

The Skeleton Knight wielded his sword quickly and 3 after images came at Weed.

‘The one above and the one below are illusions! From the motion of his shoulder, that one is real. The one that is coming for my neck.’

Weed made that judgement with his eyes closed and acted.

He could accurately judge the skills of the undead.

One mistake and he could take significant damage.

Even with his high endurance, it was difficult to take deadly

attacks.

His health would drop rapidly and his power would drop severely.

He could become temporarily paralyzed and potentially lose an arm or a leg.

‘Its coming for my throat’

He kept his eyes closed as he let the Skeleton Knight strike him in the shoulder with the sword.

- Skeleton Knight attack has decreased health by 630.

The Talrock’s armor could block 3 to 4 times more damage than normal. However an armor was useless if the user had poor skills. Most warrior types classes did not even bother to learn the skills.

It was reckless to fight with his eyes closed even if it was to raise his endurance stat.

Most people did not bother to struggle to raise endurance.

However, Weed did not miss anything trivial related to combat.

He gave up on using his eyes. By doing so he would raise the skill

proficiency much faster than usual so that its effects would increase. Even with high endurance and defense he wanted to maximize the use of Cold Eyes as well.

It was unavoidable for beginners to close their eyes in their first battle.

However actually using the skill was a world of difference.

Weed had the courage to close his eyes and use the skill in the middle of such a difficult battle.

Surka said admiringly.

“Weed’s responding well to combat. He really is the best.”

Zephyr was forced to agree.

“He repays with more for everything they give him. I would hate to be his enemy.”

The Geomchis fought while laughing.

Closing your eyes may work at first but then it might become a bad habit...

‘His skill is still growing after all.’

It was easy to lose track of the enemy in battle with one's eyes closed.

But he was deliberately closing his eyes.

He was well acquainted with the enemy's movements. He knew where the enemy was attacking and how to attack back.

Development of skill did not rely on the senses alone.

Geomchi³ and Geomchi⁴ said.

“Now this is hunting.”

“It would be nice if we had met Weed earlier.”

Geomchi⁵ gave a laugh.

“Dungeons are not such a big deal, they have like only 6000 monsters right? Soon there will be none.”

Geomchi² looked around the dungeon.

“Eight days might be too long. Let's see if we can finish this overnight! Come on, let's go!”

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5!

Fighting was as familiar to them as eating. It was going to be eight days of grueling hunting but they were going to enjoy every moment of it.

But it was going to be difficult for the member that were not monsters like Weed and the Geomchis.

However, everyone had changed from how they were in the past quite drastically.

The Geomchis were indispensable but Pale, Hwaryeong, Surka, and Zephyr's combat skills have improved dramatically.

“More Skeleton Knights! There are five this time!”

Pale had confirmed after Weed had sent him out to scout.

Usually Pale would be leader but things were different when Weed was in charge.

Everything was left up to Weed.

Weed stood at the forefront of battle and dealt damage with his superior swordsmanship and endurance.

Someone that fought directly would usually be more useful as a leader than an archer.

Weed had cold bandages, providing food and repairs, and effective skills that no one else had!

“Hwaryeong put two of them to sleep with you skills!”

“Enchanting dance!”

Hwaryeong put two of the knights to sleep with her dance. In the meantime everyone else fought the rest of the Skeleton Knights.

The Rotten Lich Dungeon increased in level as they moved on.

They would face Skeleton Knights, Chimeras, and other monsters of similar levels.

The monsters were at least level 300 and in severe cases up to 360.

Since it was the stronghold for the Undead Legion, there was no wonder that the monsters had significant levels.

Weed had one overall ability in production skills though.

He could raise the entire party's damage and defense by at least

10% and 20% respectively!

They could engage moderate numbers of enemies thanks to Hwaryeong's dancing.

The party would collapse upon and destroy moderate groups of 7 to 8 Skeleton Knights.

Exploring high level dungeons required special attention. Dancers had a big role in distracting enemy attention.

Of course, sometimes a dancer's skills could fail.

They could fall down from dancing. Once they lose balance then the skill loses power momentarily.

The higher level the enemy the more dancing was required.

Hwaryeong had to continue dancing uncomfortably. Her legs were staggering and there was a pain in her legs but she still danced strongly.

Sometimes it would fail when there were Chimeras, a form of contagious disease zombies.

That was because they didn't have any eyes to see beauty with and the difference of levels was lacking since they were at least level 350.

The Lich had made Chimeras with a wolf's head on top of an ogre's body.

“Eat the humans!”

They could only be tempted with food.

A dancer's dance was usually limited to human and humanoid monsters.

To go above these constraints required a significant amount of skill

“There's really a lot of experience.”

After hunting for a while, Irene was startled when she checked her stat window.

They were hunting 3-4 times faster than usual.

They had also discovered the dungeon so they were receiving 2 times more experience.

‘It's thanks to Weed and the Geomchis.’

Irene looked at Weed and the Geomchis' with envious eyes.

Priests were known to have weak attacking power. Weed had the turn undead skill, but it would be quite useless during hunt with a group. Therefore, strong warriors and priest go well together.

Weed said.

"I think monster in this territory are getting tougher. From now on the battle are going to get faster."

"Whoa!"

"Ah, here we go!"

Zephyr's eyes darkened. Hwaryeong's held her breath.

Up until now they were hunting comfortably.

The moment Weed said that meant that it was time for the real hunting!

The party's hunting speed accelerated.

By now, they couldn't rest and traveled quickly through the hunting ground, and if no one was injured after battle they immediately went on to the next hunting ground and continued.

So since they started this hunt, they have completed several rounds of battle. After battle had ended, the people who needed to heal up gladly sat down by the healer.

Those that could stand up were free to break off into their own group to continue hunting in the next region.

They got up and started hunting again. The problem was that the speed was slightly increasing. The interval between hunting and more hunting left them with no time to breathe.

Weed lead his companions into more battle and more battle faster and faster. They were hunting at a fearsome speed so they were getting experience and items rapidly.

“I leveled up.”

Someone would say every now and then.

Their companions would quickly say.

“Congratulations.”

“I’m close to leveling.”

“Let’s keep going then!”

There was no time to rest.

Irene had a lot of mana. She would heal them as much as she could and they would keep fighting.

Whenever their health dropped below 30% she would heal them.

To survive as long as possible, Weed would treat them.

With his advanced Cold Bandages, he could heal up up in a flash.

They only took short breaks for bandaging.

Zephyr and Hwaryeong resigned themselves to their fate.

“Keoheok!”

“I’m going to die! Weed I need to be bandaged.”

They would get hit on purpose.

Skeleton Knight skill. Darkness status.

They would deliberately get put into a state of darkness.

Even if it hurt they could lie and rest comfortably for a bit. If

their health drops low then Irene would just heal them.

After a while Weed would just bandage them up so it was almost impossible for them to get a fatal wound.

Hwaryeong and Zephyr had the same thoughts when they had hunted with Weed the first time.

The both of them wanted it to end after getting hit by the Skeleton Knight.

‘It got me.’

‘Now I can rest.’

Zephyr and Hwaryeong would just have a slight smile.

Then Weed would yell and come over with bandages.

“Pale!”

“Yes!”

“It takes about 45 seconds for bandaging. But its not enough to get Zephyr and Hwaryeong back up. Lure the monsters around and bring them back here.”

“Alright!”

Zephyr and Hwaryeong lied down injured and groaning.

‘I’ll never get out of this hell.’

‘Need to die properly.’

This was because of the unprecedented hunting speed.

Seechwi was an Orc!

Early on, Orcs had many advantages.

They had exceptional health and stamina, their death penalty was lower, and they had high defense.

Even if Orcs die, the skill loss was insignificant.

That was the one thing that Orcs had over the other races.

They were in large numbers and Orcs happened to die often but they had high growth rates.

Many people came to the village.

A lot of them were Orc users trying to form parties.

“Chwikchwik. Let’s go hunt foxes.”

“Chwik. Chwik! Fox meat is delicious.”

The number of people in the town were increasing and the Orcs were repopulating.

Orcs sold meat to the stores. A lot of new Orcs were constantly being born.

The city was horribly expanding.

New Orcs were born in village near the Yuroki Mountains.

It takes time for a human village to expand but for Orcs the only thing they needed was food.

Seechwi scoured the Yuroki Mountains for Seoyoon. However to find one person was close to impossible. However Seechwi had a secret weapon.

“That look familiar to the direction that Seoyoon went in.”

She could watch the videos in Seoyoon’s capsule!

Seoyoon was hunting so with a bit of luck she could catch up in time.

Luckily Seoyoon fought three to four monsters at once.

All monsters gave up their lives when they attacked Seoyoon. She killed all the belligerent ogre forces in the Yuroki Mountains.

Seechwi tried to say as gently as possible.

“Seoyoon. Chwichwichwik!”

Horrible nasals sounds came out when she spoke.

Seechwi laughed and said.

“I’ll come with you. I’m Cha Eunhee. Chwichwit.”

“...”

Seoyoon didn’t say anything. However Seechwi knew this wasn’t a rejection. If she had refused then she would have walked away. Seoyoon did not refuse because it was someone that she was close to.

“Chwichwik. Let’s get quests and sell japtem.”

Seechwi stayed with Seoyoon who had gotten a quest from the Dark Elves even though she didn't say anything.

It was more comforting now that someone was traveling with Seoyoon rather than leaving her alone.

It was still really dangerous and she could die in battle.

However, thanks to Seoyoon it was not dangerous at all. She took care of her because she was weak.

Seechwi smiled seeing that there was a little change.

‘Okay. This means that her mind has opened up a little.’

It was difficult to start the healing process. Any treatment is useless if the patient is unwilling to open up.

After she had saw Seoyoon cry, it was enough to show that she still had emotion.

“The quest was to obtain some red fruit. Okay chwit. I'll get some and come back. Chwit.”

The elderly Dark Elf wanted to eat a Red Dawn Fruit before he died.

Seoyoon and Seechwi acquired information about the quest.

It was not in Seoyoon's personality to refuse requests like these.

“These monsters give a lot of experience and items. Let's hunt here.”

Seeyoon listened to Seechwi as she led her along.

Then when she had finished about 30 quests.

Ttiring!

The Great Orc.

Alone they are vulnerable but because of their racial characteristics together they are strong.

Orcs like a strong leader. You have proven yourself to be a strong Orc.

Do you wish to become an Orc commander?

Orc Commander profession!

The Orcs had a lot of professions that dealt with heavy weaponry. Orc commanders were a particularly special profession.

Seechwi had not gotten a profession. An opportunity to get a profession barely ever showed up.

She had been too preoccupied with doing quests.

Rather than raising her level herself, she obtained most of her experience from Seoyoon.

The amount of experience of hunting with Seoyoon was small because of such a huge level difference but she still received some because she was in the party.

It was more than how much she would have received from hunting alone!

Thanks to hunting with Seoyoon, the opportunity to become an Orc commander opened up.

“I’ll do it. Chwitchwit!”

Seechwi became an Orc commander and wandered around with Seoyoon doing quests.

They wandered from the Orc Village to the Dark Elf Village while hunting.

Normally someone with looks like Seoyoon would draw attention

but she normally hid her face when she went into towns.

Seechwi also approved that Seoyoon hide her face.

It was not a good idea to draw people's attention with a pretty face. There was no need to socialize with such people. Then they managed to obtain some information.

From the Dark Elf Granbell.

“Seechwi. You may be an Orc but we are friends. In fact, dark elves are usually against Orcs but I still consider you a friend.”

Seechwi's major helped her here as well.

A doctorate in psychoanalysis!

Psychoanalysis was not just guessing what people were thinking. That was just the surface, and what it was really about was seeing the secret thoughts and emotions that people hid underneath.

Seechwi was specialized in psychoanalysis and she grasped the villager's tendencies.

An female Orc flattering dark elves!

Seechwi used her psychology to raise her intimacy with the

residents.

Through her hard work, she realized that the dark elves loved receiving flattery.

Dark Elf Granbell broke into a laugh.

“My friend was pleased that you got him the red fruit he had wanted to eat. Even though you are not a dark elf, let me tell you of a good hunting spot for the future. If you go east of here you will find a dungeon to hunt in. That dungeon is the source of the undead that have plagued us. There will be plenty of things to hunt in there.”

Seechwi had a high amount of fame for her level.

Orcs had fairly high growth for fame and levels.

But that increased greatly by doing quests and hunting with Seoyoon.

They had received hordes of information on hunting grounds.

Seechwi and Seoyoon headed to the hunting grounds to become the first discoverers.

“If I get double experience, then I’ll level even faster! Chwichwik!”

Seechwi had a fairly high level until she became an Orc.

She had chose it because it was Orcs were very interesting, so she didn't regret it and she wanted to level up and get stronger as soon as possible.

Double experience.

The gap between her and Seoyoon will close quickly if she levels up faster.

Seechwi and Seoyoon went to the pit.

“Huh. Chwichwichwit!”

A discovery message did not pop up.

“I can't believe it. Chwitchwitchwit.”

Seechwi then remembered something.

‘Who else would have heard that story? It must be him...’

Karichwi had hunted alongside Seoyoon!

An Orc with a legendary presence.

He became famous through the Hall of Fame video and the KMC's broadcast.

“Let's find out. Chwitchwit!”

Seechwi led Seoyoon inside to find Weed.

There were a lot of areas where monsters had been cleared out.

Finally they met Weed and Pale's party.

“Orc.”

To Surka and Irene, seeing an Orc here was amazing enough.

It was also accompanied by a woman.

Seechwi was surprised.

She did not know that so many people were hunting here.

Seechwi said with difficulty.

“I didn't know that there was another party. Are you guys the

first discoverers? Chwik.”

“Yes.”

Pale decided to step in since Weed didn't look like he was going to say anything.

“Then, do you know the way out? It was really difficult to get here. Chwichwik.”

Seechwi's face looked very tough but she was able to convey herself to the party.

‘To come this far must have been tough.’

‘Orc. To come this far it must be a quest and also a pretty high level user but even then it would be tough.’

‘To get through the Karaka Woods we had to take down the King Snake.’

They had suffered and earned a right to hunt in the pit.

But now there was another party and there were unavoidable circumstances.

Pale shook his head.

“There is no need. It is not a small dungeon so take your time hunting.”

“Yeah. Go ahead and hunt. There are too few people for such a large dungeon.”

Surka said. The party was being very courteous.

In the Versailles Continent, the higher level dungeons were monopolized and murder was common over them.

It was common to get kick out if you did not get permission from the other hunting parties in advance.

It was possible to force another hunting party out as well.

Seechwi looked thrilled.

“Thank you very much. Chwitchwit!”

“But where are you going to hunt? You can come with us if you want. Is that okay with you Weed?”

Seecwhi smiled at what Pale had said. It was very rare to find such pure and good people on the Versailles Continent.

It was even harder for Orcs. Most people wouldn't let others join in their party.

It could be seen what caring people they are since they invited them to join their party.

“Good work, Pale.”

“Yeah! That's the way you do it.”

“Way to help others in need.”

“Hahaha. It's not like I'm losing anything.”

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 praised Pale simultaneously. All they saw was a woman and they didn't even see her as an Orc!

It was a good group of people.

She was thankful to Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5.

‘Such nice people.’

Seechwi smiled and said.

“Nice to meet you. My name is Seechwi. Chwit! This is Seoyoon. Chwit!”

‘How is she here!’

Weed was surprised the moment he saw Seoyoon.

She was covering her face so he couldn’t see that it was her.

But that atmosphere she had! He could see the armor and sword that only Seoyoon had.

The problem was that Seoyoon had already discovered the statues he had made of her.

‘I didn’t think that you would chase after me. However you are trying to catch Karichwi and not me.’

Weed messaged his party.

-The fact that I am Orc Karichwi is a secret.

-Yes, I know.

His party easily listened to Weed.

The Orc Karichwi had already risen to the top of the Hall of

Fame. It was unnecessary to tell others and cause Weed unwanted trouble.

In fact, Weed was afraid if they did tell people.

He had reasons to be afraid.

It would be annoying if Seoyoon chased after him ruthlessly with her sword. He had nothing to be afraid of from boss monsters.

His pride as a man!

It was alright as long as they didn't say anything.

Weed raised the hunting speed now that Seoyoon joined the party.

He wanted to prevent his party from talking with Seechwi and Seoyoon.

Everyone in the party except Weed was worried.

‘Are they able to fight properly?’

‘I must protect the party.’

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 started to

compete with each other.

Brave knights who come to help when monsters attack. It was the best way to get along with other people on the Versailles Continent. Seechwi and Seoyoon were positioned next to Irene. Then the Skeleton Knights appeared.

Seoyoon pulled out her sword and rushed forward excellently.

Kwakwakwakwang!

A powerful force came from the sword!

It had tremendous crushing power.

It was easier to fight when you use mana but hard to stay within the mana range.

“Krahhagh!”

“My...lovely bones....”

The Skeleton Knights brutally collapsed.

The monsters that Weed and the Geomchis had to hit so many times to kill, Seoyoon caught easily.

"...."

Geomchi₄ widened his mouth.

There was no more hope!

The opportunity to flaunt themselves in battle had disappeared. Weed was acquainted with Seoyoon but it came as a surprise to the rest of the party.

It was the first time they saw such a high level user.

Endless stamina.

A berserker's characteristic was to constantly fight monsters.

With Seoyoon, hunting got much faster.

Dark Shamans using evil witchcraft.

Their powers increased the strength of the undead.

It was similar to Dark Speculation.

Using black magic on the undead.

The party fought a nonstop battle against high level undead.

“Heokheok. It’s too hard.”

Pale was short on breath.

“I would rather die than keep going.”

Maylon wanted to give up on life. However, she already saw Hwaryeong and Zephyr, so even if you wanted to die Irene would just heal you up.

‘No one dies without my permission.’

The highest virtue of a cleric!

No one can die during a battle.

The situation changed now. They begged Irene to let them die. But Irene refused to let them.

Under Irene’s strict protection they were not allowed to die. It only made the party suffer even more and increase their wanting to die!

They continued to fight dozens of enemies in the time span of 1 hour. They used to take breaks in moderation and leisurely chat

while hunting.

But it was different with Weed.

Almost without rest, endlessly hunting.

He considered and thoroughly managed the various movements and appearance of monsters as well as time management, health, mana, stamina, and fatigue.

If there wasn't enough mana, he would use bandages to heal.

He thoroughly beat up monsters with his melee skills.

Hunting became several times more difficult.

There were several life and death moments in the course of a single hour.

Proper meals were replaced with jerky or bread eaten along the way.

Record breaking time.

A relentless hectic battle ensued.

It was Pale's and Irene's first real hunting experience.

Weed would sweep away on the monsters back on the Continent of Magic. Now he was doing the same here in the Versailles Continent. Unfortunately, his party was witnessing it for themselves.

They thought they would go insane as days passed.

“How can they be human...”

For two days they continued to complain and then they stopped.

If they had the energy to complain they would rather rest.

Hunting at such a tremendous pace high levels of stamina.

They could last three or four days.

But they were forced to go even further than they were ever used to until now.

Then on the seventh day.

You have hunted all the monsters in the Rotten Lich Dungeon.

Title of Lich Dungeon Hunter has been given.

Fame has increased by 100.

The rights to double drop and experience for a week have disappeared.

On the seventh day they managed to kill all the monsters in the dungeon. Weed managed to raise his sword skill five levels.

However it had severe side effects on the party.

“Kerr haa haa haak!”

Pale, Maylon, Surka, and Hwaryeong collapsed. They were literally too tired to stand up.

Only Weed, Seoyoon, Seechwi and the Geomchis remained.

Seechwi also did not have much strength left.

Even though she was just a low level porter, she manage to get a considerable amount of experience.

‘These monsters!’

In her eyes, Weed and the Geomchis were not human.

At first she had thought that Weed and the Geomchis were just

manly people but then decided that they were monsters after having been dragged around.

Because she was low level she had to be on the defense a lot. Geomchi2 did not hesitate to protect Seechwi despite her appearance.

It was uncommon for men to do such things nowadays.

But as for the hunting...

“Well, see you later. Chwiichwiik!”

Seechwi logged out and Seoyoon terminated her connection without saying anything. Even if she fought monsters to relieve stress, this was just too harsh.

The party was going to leave but then Weed looked at Geomchi.

“Master.”

“Huh?”

“You need to be careful when you are hunting. I have the map of the dungeon so I can find where there aren’t that many monsters.”

“Well, I guess. Should I use bandages generously?”

“They should be used sparingly.”

Chapter 7: Classical Concert

Lee Hyun got up early in the morning to go to the market. To buy fresh groceries for his sister!

He prepared food for his sister, and logged in to the Hall of Fame. He uploaded videos of the Lich and dungeon hunts.

“I wonder how many views I’ll get this time.”

He didn’t expect too much because non-quest related hunting videos were not popular.

People enjoy watching fierce battles instead.

But it has its advantages, because other players also upload videos of themselves hunting.

“For now, I’ll just post it.”

He did it in hope that others will take interest in it. It was a difficult competition in order to gain more popularity.

“It’s still better than not uploading it.”

KMC Media browses the Hall of Fame looking for hunting movie videos that will sell.

Lee Hyun, again uploaded the entire video of his two days hunt.

Diiirrrriiing!

Out of nowhere, something in his computer rang.

He had uploaded the footage stored in his capsule onto the Internet using his severely outdated computer.

From time to time, he would find random parts from broken down computers to repair his computer.

“So its been about 2 years.”

Weed browsed around on the internet until noon for information. He could not allow himself to fall behind on info about Royal Road.

There were all sorts things going on throughout the continent all the time that no one knew about.

Lee Hyun accessed the Dark Gamer's site.

There were a great number of Dark Gamers. They could be referred to as one of the most pivotal forces on the Versailles Continent.

People regretted participating in the Northern Expedition

How was the heat on the continent going to be overcome

Those were the first posts that caught his eyes.

‘I guess that’s the Northern Expedition.’

Weed read through the posts roughly.

At first things had started off well since they were moving to the northern lands.

However, they had not been prepared for the imaginable cold and ice storms.

At night they could get killed by a chunk of ice or freeze to death because of the cold.

However due to the extreme cold, it was easy to catch an awful cold that considerably reduced physical ability.

They would have a hard time travelling in the north and they would have to fight against the monsters and wild beasts so gradually more people would desert the expedition.

They had high morale at the beginning of the expedition, but after they suffer like beggars for awhile it would soon disappear.

In addition, the responses were not very good.

As Dark Gamers, we need to prioritize money. However, it is not always good to concentrate on a reckless quest.

No matter how large a crisis is on the continent, I'm still going to be able to hunt and gather items.

There were mostly comments from solo Dark Gamers.

Lee Hyun read several more posts.

A new series of magic profession. Necromancers have been unlocked for use.

Combat based professions. Their strengths and limitations.

Good professions with overall balance.

Suitable professions for soloing.

Professions that are adept at earning money.

The future of adventurers three years after the start of the

Versailles Continent?

Monster drop list.

The most popular posts on the Dark Gamer's forum were mainly about items.

But the viewership on profession related posts were also high.

In the post about the Necromancer profession, there was already a lot of information that was gathered about the class.

Some very tricky quests had to be performed to become a Necromancer.

To produce the first undead, it required fresh bodies and they need to have an affinity with death.

You also need to kill a lot of that type of creature.

That will increase the ability.

It was not an easy thing to do, but it was alluring to reign over a legion of undead.

‘This is good. I’m guessing the tome will become very expensive when I sell it.’

Weed still had not sold the tome he had obtained from Lich Shire.

Early on, Necromancer items will not sell for much. The market value still have not been formed.

Necromancers were very good magic professions since they did not need to buy magical items in order to use spells like wizards.

As more time passes, the Necromancer class will gain more popularity and the price of the tome will gradually rise.

‘I can probably sell it after 2~3 months.’

Weed read about the other combat based professions carefully.

Posts praising their profession!

Each of the posts boasted the advantages that their profession had. However, nobody recommended any crafting professions.

It was very rare for there to be adventuring professions in the Dark Gamers.

Most of them were solo combat professions such as Paladins that could use healing magic.

Elementalists were also spotlighted since they could summon spirits to fight.

Finally after Lee Hyun search up info on monsters, he stood up and got ready to leave.

*

Today was Friday.

His little sister came back early from school

“Hayan, do you want to come along?”

Lee Hyun asked his sister who was resting and watching the television.

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going to see some people I met in Royal Road.”

“You mean the people you were talking about the other day?”

“Yea, we’re going to see a performance.”

“That sounds great.”

Lee Hyun sometimes talked to his sister about Royal Road.

Royal Road was the most popular game. His sister always paid attention whenever he said anything about it.

Hayan Lee just said.

“I’m just going to stay home and relax.”

“Yea? Be sure to lock the doors.”

“Yes. You don’t have to worry.”

His sister would usually just return home from school and rest.

‘She’s been busy studying so she must be tired.’

Lee Hyun quietly left the house.

Hayan Lee leapt up from where she was and nervously paced around after making sure she locked the door.

‘Today they announce the results.’

At 5 p.m. the University of Korea would announce the results on the internet and by phone.

Hayan Lee was waiting for the results.

She was going to find out whether or not Lee Hyun passed and how she was going to tell him.

*

The cafe was booming.

It was located in the area around the university so the place had a continuous amount of people passing through.

Apart from that this place was also popular for other reasons.

Couples in Royal Road would meet up here.

The cafe!

This was a place where you could meet people that you built relationships with in Royal Road!

It was already considered a popular location.

“Keuheum!”

“Miss, can I get another one of those parfait things?”

“How is it that you are thirsty..”

“Argh, I’m nervous. I need to relax.”

*

Ahn Hyundo.

The instructors Chung Il Hoon, Choi Jong Bom, Ma Sang Bom, and Roi Lee.

They, who have trained their entire lives in the way of the sword, arrived first and were waiting for their companions.

They had combed their hair back and their muscles were bursting out of their suits.

Chung Il Hoon was hot since he was wearing sleeves.

“The dojo is a lot more familiar and comfortable than here.”

Roi Lee thought so as well.

“Training in the jungle was not as uncomfortable as this.”

“There are so many people I have never seen before. In addition, their clothes are very revealing.”

Choi Jong Bom did not know where to keep his eyes.

There were a lot of slender women who were not wearing much clothing. His face was flushed.

Then Ahn Hyundo said.

“Then do you want to go back to the dojo?”

“ ... ”

Nobody could answer.

It was uncomfortable and awkward, but none of them were willing to leave.

A long time passed.

The time for the meeting was in ten minutes.

Oh Dongman appeared holding hands with Min Sinhye.

On the Versailles Continent, Min Sinhye was Maylon and Oh Dongman was otherwise known as Pale.

“Hello.”

“Nice to meet you.”

Oh Dongman and Min Sinhye bent over and greeted them.

They faced them and tried bending over to return the friendly greeting with their large sturdy bodies.

Iron River, the nickname that Mapan had given them when he first saw them surprisingly fit.

“Hey buddy.”

Ahn Hyundo tried to get the instructors to relax with the young people.

Then people began to show up one after another.

“Ah, it’s this way!”

Ahn Hyundo and Chung Il Hoon bent over to greet Kim In Young who came into the cafe wearing a bright white dress.

“Hello.”

“Yeah. So you came? You look prettier in person.”

“Thank you.”

“What is your name?”

“Kim In Young.”

She took a seat and sat down.

Then Yeon Hee Park and Yoon Soo Park came over to say hi, otherwise known as Romuna and Surka respectively.

“Hello.”

“Nice to meet you.”

They could not help but be surprised when they saw Ahn Hyundo.

‘Scary!’

‘His eyes look like he’s out for blood.’

Then they looked over.

Chung Il Hoon!

He had a dignified but wildly handsome face. He looked as if he was a very tolerant person.

Choi Jong Bom. Ma Sang Bom and Roi Lee.

They naturally kept their waists bent.

It was if it was on instinct.

The cafe became calmer when Choi Ji Hoon, otherwise known as the fisherman Zephyr entered into the cafe with his gentle look.

“Hyung, it’s a pleasure.”

He reluctantly made a respectful greeting!

By now he had already been noticed. He was meeting in real life.

The entrance was getting loud.

“Jae Lynn is here,”

“The singer.”

“A celebrity’s coming here...”

“So this means that she plays Royal Road?”

She blatantly appeared walking in!

Even with a hat and sunglasses, it was easy to know someone’s face.

The moment Jae Lynn entered the cafe, everyone stopped talking and turned their attention towards her.

The clothes she was wearing, even if it wasn’t a performance costume, harmonized with her appearance.

The clothes softly exposed her waist and the top of her chest, showing off her seductive curves.

They could not take their eyes off of her white neckline.

Looking around the cafe, Jae Lynn walked in the direction of Ahn Hyundo and Chung Il Hoon.

Gulp!

“That girl...why is she coming over here, Sahyung?”

“Why, why is she coming?”

“Sahyung, maybe we did something wrong...”

Choi Jong Bom, Ma Sang Bom, and Roi Lee trembled badly.
Chung Il Hoon smiled, puzzled.

“Guys, do you not know why?”

“Sahyung, do you have any idea?”

“You tell me!”

“That’s all there is to it.”

Chung Il Hoon shrugged his shoulders.

“Wasn’t it because she was attracted to my fabulous muscles?
Hahaha!”

“...”

They still did not know why.

Chi Jong Bom, Ma Sang Bom, and Roi Lee thought in the back of their heads.

‘Every time he thinks of women in the same sense that he think of fighting.’

Despite Chung Il Hoon misunderstanding, Jae Lynn greeted them.

“Hi. I barely made it here in time. So Weed is not here yet?”

She sat down in an empty seat.

Oh Dongman widened his eyes and asked nervously.

“Well, excuse me.”

“Yes?”

“Do you mean... that you are Hwaryeong?”

“Yeah.”

Jae Lynn nodded in confirmation.

Of all the women that have yet to show up, Hwaryeong was the only one left in the group.

‘So this means...that we have been playing the same game as Jae Lynn this entire time!’

Oh Dongman and Min Sinhye were shocked. Anyone could enjoy Royal Road. There was no law against having celebrities play. To think that they would actually meet someone that did!

Yoon Soo Park caught Jae Lynn’s hands.

“Unnie, I’m a fan.”

“Really? Thank you.”

“You’re a lot prettier in real life. Why is it that you look a little different?”

“Is it now? You can change your face when you make a character. I changed a lot of things like the eyes and the overall impression of the body so people don’t recognize me.”

“The body?”

“That’s where I was ignorant. I thought that if I ate delicious things I would gain weight...so I thought as a dancer I would do a lot of physical activity.”

Jae Lynn and Yoon Soo Park started having all sorts of conversations.

Yeon Hee Park and Kim In Young faces flashed with tension.

‘A tremendous competitor has shown up.’

‘In Royal Road she was targeting Weed, surely not here as well...!’

‘I do not thinks so, but she still is an entertainer and singer.’

A confrontation sparked over a man!

Chung Il Hoon, Choi Jong Bom, Ma Sang Bom, and Roi Lee were all 5 years older than them.

That was why they did not intervene in the women’s conversation at all.

Oh Dongman was only interested in Min Sinhye and Ji Hoon was talking nicely about a few topics.

Roi Lee whispered to Choi Jong Bom.

“She is a very pretty lady.”

“Yea, Sahyung, I did not think she was going to be that pretty.”

They were unaware of the fact that Jae Lynn was a singer.

A large number of people were meeting up on table 2.

A mix of young men and women created a bright atmosphere.

Having a fond conversation about small topics!

However, Ahn Hyundo was in his 50s so he just sat there. He did not say a word and just sat in his rigid posture.

They played together in Royal Road. But the age difference was just too much so he couldn't hold up in conversation. Furthermore the look in his eyes stung. It was like a group of people sat down and he was bullying them for attention.

Then Lee Hyun came into the cafe. He did not modify his appearance in Royal Road so it was easy for them to recognize him.

“This way!”

Yoon Soo Park waved her hand.

Lee Hyun slowly approached and greeted them.

“Hi, I’m Lee Hyun.”

He was already acquainted with Ahn Hyundo, Chung Il Hoon, Choi Jong Bom, Ma Sang Bom, and Roi Lee. That split up the greetings.

“I’m Oh Dongman.”

“Min Sinhye.”

“My name is Ji Hoon. Hyung!”

Lee Hyun easily accepted it since he saw them a lot in Royal Road.

Lee Hyun was going to sit next to Jae Lynn. It was the empty spot near the entrance so he did it without really thinking. Jae Lynn was a famous singer. Like Ahn Hyundo, Lee Hyun had no idea of it. In fact, according to Weed’s criteria, Jae Lynn was an average woman.

‘She’s wearing expensive looking clothes. Necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and other accessories. Luxury is useless!’

It was minus 200 points by his criteria.

“Lee Hyun.”

Choi Jang Bom called out to him as he was going to sit.

“Yes, Sahyung.”

“This spot is also empty. Why don’t you sit over here?”

Lee Hyun rejected his offer and sat down.

“Sahyung, you’re here early.”

“I came a little early. How about you?”

“I’m late because I was stuck on the bus.”

From there on, the atmosphere became a little brighter.

Chung Il Hoon and Choi Jong Bom had a scary face and they had a hard time talking to people for the first time.

Aside from looking scary, it was hard to them to say anything in such a rigid atmosphere!

Once Lee Hyun came, it was easier for Chung Il Hoon and Choi Jong Bom to talk. The edge of the burden was relieved.

Oh Dongman rose from his seat.

“If we leave now, I think we can get to the concert on time. Come on everyone.”

Hearing that, they began to hurry.

Lee Hyun suddenly leaned over.

“Ah, my shoelace...”

“ ... ”

He was no different than how he was in Royal Road!

He eventually went with Ahn Hyundo to the concert.

Classical concert.

It was very full because a famous French orchestra was performing tonight.

Oh Dongman and Min Sinhye reserved some seats in the middle.

Min Sinhye reserves such difficult seats because she was in the broadcasting industry.

Lee Hyun sat down.

The concert began with the conductor's greeting.

He was a rookie conductor recognized in France. He held concerts all around the world and raised his fame and confidence.

‘Korea has culturally outdated performances. It's time that the audience experiences something new and surprising.’

It started with a solemn grim atmosphere. Then 10 minutes in, there was a sound.

Deureureuong!

Kuul!

Chung Il Hoon and Ahn Hyundo had fallen asleep and were snoring.

Oh Dongman looked around. Everyone was looking at them.

‘This is embarrassing.’

Oh Dongman's face reddened.

He was also scared that they would recognize Jae Lynn.

Yeon Hee Park complained.

‘To fall asleep in a place like this. I don’t even know how they can do that.’

But then ten minutes later.

“Haaaaaaah.”

Ji Hoon’s eyelids started getting heavy.

“Even together these performances are really boring.”

He looked around and everyone was asleep.

Oh Dongman, Kim In Young, Min Sinhye, and Yeon Hee Park were all asleep.

Their consecutive hunting accumulated a lot of fatigue. They fell asleep when the tension was gone and it was relaxed.

“Come to think of it, I’m getting sleepy too.”

Ji Hoon also slipped into sleep.

A group of people were falling asleep!

Jae Lynn was startled when she heard the sound of snoring during the classical music. Everyone was asleep.

“Shouldn’t we wake them up?”

She carefully whispered to Lee Hyun, who was sitting next to her. However there was no answer.

“You’re kidding?”

Jae Lynn grabbed Hyun Lee’s hands and shook them. She was literally shaking him to see if there was a response. He was watching the performance with his eyes wide open but he was asleep.

“Wow, you’re really asleep.”

Jae Lynn just sighed. Eventually she just closed her eyes.

“I’m the strongest.”

Ahn Hyundo was dreaming.

There were echoes as he marched through the streets.

He achieved a great victory in war and was being recognized as a hero!

“Please allow me this dance.”

“You are very beautiful”

Chung Il Hoon was dreaming too.

He was in a medieval palace with splendid music playing.

The entire place was filled with beautiful women from noble families!

It was common for women to be attracted to promising knights with powerful bodies.

He was covered in precious stones and gem to return to his hometown.

He had great riches!

However, they were not the only ones.

‘Monster!’

‘Damn these guys.’

‘There it is again’

The rest were having nightmares of hunting in the dungeon.

Unlike Ahn Hyundo, Chung Il Hoon, and everyone else, Lee Hyun slept like the dead.

Under no circumstance did he relax.

One less hour of sleep meant more experience he could get and more skill proficiency he could raise.

He could not rest because of Royal Road’s monthly fee.

So to Lee Hyun, the concert was his precious time of relaxation.

Hyun was sound asleep as he was unknowingly lying against Jae Lynn’s shoulder.

Jae Lynn could feel the touch of his body as she gently stroked his hair.

Meanwhile, the conductor was furious and in a frenzy.

‘How could they fall asleep listening to my music! What does my

music possibly lack?’

The conductor put all his strength into conducting the orchestra.

The passion! The electrifying feeling, the best music.

Even if it was to only wake up the people that fell asleep.

They left the concert and they were stretching out.

“That was a really good show.”

“I’m still kind of tired...”

“My body is refreshed.”

“Oh, I slept well.”

They were hungry after a refreshing sleep.

“Hey, I’m buying.”

Ji Hoon went ahead and took them to a nearby restaurant.

Eating all they could would relieve their fatigue.

They got a lot of meat onto their bowls and got platters of roasted meat,

They shared up the roasted meat and drank while chatting.

It was nothing special, but they were satisfied and happy.

By the time they finished dinner and went outside, it was already dark.

“It’s a shame that we have to leave now.”

It was a bit of an emotional parting.

They suddenly met with each other and saw each other’s faces.

But they did actually meet in real life.

“It was nice to see you. Now we can meet up anytime.”

“I had a good time.”

“See you next time.”

“We’ll see you in the Rotten Lich’s dungeon.”

“We really need to sell off that japtem.”

They exchanged emails and telephone numbers and then they went home.

Lee Hyun rode on the bus and went home. But when he went home, he saw Hayan sitting on the chair in front of the computer wiping away her tears.

“What’s going on?”

Lee Hyun trembled with anger.

Hayan had never been fortunate in the past.

Kid would use to tease about their parents.

“Well...”

Hayan was using the computer and went to the University of Korea’s website.

There was the list of successful applicants.

“I got accepted into the University.”

Lee Hyun quickly glanced at the monitor screen.

“Is this the University of Korea’s successful candidate roster? Are you absolutely certain that you passed?”

“Yes. My name is written there.”

“And did you get a scholarship?”

“They contacted me on the phone earlier and I got the scholarship.”

Hyun Lee’s body was trembling. When he first heard it he had tears of joy.

‘But why did she have to receive the scholarship...’

The promise he made to his sister!

If she received a scholarship then Lee Hyun would have to attend university.

“Oppa, didn’t you promise to go to college?”

“Yeah. I’ll keep my promise.”

Lee Hyun had a bad taste in his mouth.

He was going to send his sister to college, but now he was going to spend an enormous amount of money to attend college.

But he already made the promise.

However, he was not light hearted.

There was more to worry about than college acceptance.

Now he still needed to earn money.

Lee Hyun took out a passbook hidden within a book and gave it to Hayan.

“I still want to help pay for your tuition. I want you to be able to buy clothes and have spending money. At the very least, so that a trip abroad will not matter.”

“Oppa.”

“As a college student you will be studying hard. There will be times where you will need to spend money. I’ve been saving a little from wherever I could. I did it just for a time like this.”

Lee Hyun wanted to teach her how to spend money.

Ever since he was young, he was always saving and he did not know how to spend money. But he was not stupid to think that money was something that he took to the grave.

He spent his money sparingly.

Lee Hyun was tenaciously collecting money for his family.

“Thank you.”

Hayan’s eyes were tearing up.

She carefully opened the passbook which contained 30 million won that her brother had been steadily saving for her college tuition.

He willingly walked around to save bus fare to save up this money.

‘He did all this for me in a year?’

For a while, Hayan had trouble holding the money.

She didn’t know what she was even supposed to spend it on.

She was going to go the college and try to not spend a lot of money.

But she was a college student.

They were supposed to be economically self-reliant.

Books, tutoring, and tuition were covered by the scholarship.

‘I want to experience the way you see the world.’

In the very end, Hayan decided to order a capsule.

The Church of Freya!

There were a few people trying to purchase holy water and blessings.

“Hey did you hear the news?”

“What news?”

“The Hermes Guild took down three castles yesterday.”

“Even that one castle?”

“Yea. It lasted quite long but it couldn’t handle an all out attack from the Hermes Guild.”

Urban cities were greatly different.

Urban cities could train soldiers and archers from the population.

They could also conquer cities for commercial gain.

For a castle, having military power is an important role.

“They’re occupying all the territories of Haven Kingdom. Have they already occupied the entire kingdom?”

“Not yet. There’s still a few cities left.”

“The towns and cities won’t be able to stop it.”

“Well it’s not important. They’re all going to fall to the Hermes Guild.”

“Bad Ray called himself the king. He’s going to be ascending the throne shortly. It’s a wonderful coronation with over 6000 guests apparently.”

Between users there was endless talk about the Hermes and Bad Ray.

He was the first person qualified to be king and the strongest in the Versailles Continent.

He was the true meaning of a king.

Bad Ray did not have a very good reputation.

To get where he was now, he had to fight a lot of battles.

Cruelty, do not accept any surrender!

That's to that notoriety, it has risen to the heights it has now.

“That castle had miserable military strength.”

“Still, the Hermes Guild is not going to have a bright future.”

“You're right. Half of the guilds under the Hermes Guild's banner are useless.”

“I heard that the Iron Templars and the Lone Wizards Guilds are forming a coalition.”

“It looks like there's going to be a great war with the Hermes Guild. Which side should we go with?”

“No no. The Hermes Guild will collect funds in the meantime and

devote the money to internal affairs.”

“Come to think of it, they did acquire a lot of land. They’re going to get attacked.”

“Keeping something is harder than taking it.”

“The war will not stop.”

Thus people were talking.

Then the Templars that represented the Church of Freya entered.

People stopped their conversations to watch.

Large movement of the Church of Freya’s Templars!

“What’s going on?”

“It looks like something is happening.”

Chapter 8: Forced Quest Trigger

When Weed connected to the game, everyone else was already gathered together. The Orc Seechwi and Seoyoon were there too.

“ ... ”

Weed had a pain in his chest whenever he saw Seoyoon.

She was definitely going to get back at him because he had made a sculpture of her without her permission!

The idea that Seoyoon was a killer was firmly held in his heart. Even if she had not learned how to wield a sword properly, he feared the terrible things that would happen if he was careless.

“What else do you want to hunt?”

Weed was trying to resume the hunt when Geomchi raised his hand.

“First I have something to say.”

“Go ahead master.”

“We would like to go and hunt separately.”

“...Did we do something to offend you?”

“That’s not it, we just want to do some hunting on our own.”

Weed looked over at Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5.

“You all feel the same way?”

They nodded.

It was a decision the Geomchis had made after talking about it to each other.

Hunting together in groups was more enjoyable.

But they realized the limitations in it.

There was a limit to how much they could avoid an enemy’s attacks with just their movements.

All their stat growth was in attack! They were very vulnerable to magic attacks and curses as well as to sudden attacks from random monsters.

‘We don’t want to embarrass ourselves. It wouldn’t look good if

we end up dying in front of the children.'

Geomchi also supported the idea for other reasons.

Their defense was very low and honestly speaking their damage was too weak in order to be hunting with the party.

Then they had seen Seoyoon. Their damage was nowhere close to her level!

'Amazing! Even without the proper movements, I did not think it possible to do that with just a higher skill level.'

'Dashing. It's a skill that rushes towards the enemy. In reality it would be hard to show off that sort of explosive power.'

'Using skills. Even if they fake and can only be used in Royal Road. I am still strong.'

'It wouldn't hurt to become the strongest in this continent.'

Geomchi, Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 played around in Royal Road.

They were actual swordsmen in real life.

Most of the other Geomchis came in order to hone their skills but

the instructors had come to play around.

However, for the first time they got sincere about the game.

Although it was only to remove their weaknesses and raise their skill levels to become the very best.

Royal Road was without a doubt virtual reality. They could see, touch, and feel.

It was also a world in itself.

They wanted to become the best in this world as well.

It was difficult for them to bear being even a little bit weaker than someone else.

Of course, Geomchi5 had an opinion.

“Ahem! Master and Sahyungs as well. I think we should properly think about what we need to do.”

“What do you mean? Do you mean our lack of armor? If that is the case, can’t we just see if Weed can make us some decent armor?”

Geomchi5 just shook his head and said.

“It’s not so simple. As you guys know, this place is called the Versailles Continent”

“That’s right. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that we have not seen enough of this world.”

“That also means the creation of couples. Pale was able to get a girlfriend. Yesterday since we went to the cafe, I decided that I didn’t want to be alone.”

“Then, Geomchi⁵ are you suggesting...”

“We need to become the best! Being the best means that we become very popular. Don’t you guys see what I’m saying?”

Geomchi⁴ was trembling with excitement.

“I see. Outside of Serabourg there was a famous guild recruiting all sorts of people!”

“There were quite a few high level people going off to a hunt. If we go and show that we are the best, then we can become popular.”

Geomchi⁵ made a suggestion.

They could show off their unrealistic and overpowering strength

to women and children. It was obvious to Geomchi4 what Geomchi5 was suggesting.

“Sahyung are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“Its a good idea Geomchi5.”

After thinking about it Geomchi2 nodded. However it was not yet decided. There were still a few issues being left out.

They had saw the Geomchis at the concert.

Lifelong bachelors.

They didn’t have to guess, since it seemed that they had devoted their lives to the sword.

That was become to normal people, they seemed content being crazy swordsmen.

‘Meet with a woman alone? Indeed there are more than just teens and people in their 20s playing on the Versailles Continent.’

Geomchi thought about it and nodded his head.

“It’s a good idea Geomchi4.”

The Geomchis made their decision to leave. On the surface they left in order to become stronger.

Weed made the Geomchis wear basic armor.

“The defense is higher now and it’s pretty light so you don’t have to worry about it restricting your movements. There is also some magic resist so you don’t need to be that wary of magic anymore.”

“That’s good to know.”

Weed made armor, boots, helmets, and gloves from the iron ore and leather they obtained from the Rotten Lich Dungeon.

It came out with relatively average defense because he was using normal materials, but with Weed’s Intermediate Level 3 Blacksmithing he could probably get about 250000 won for them.

That was because of his advanced Handicrafting that the item’s durability was significantly higher than usual.

“This is a gift. You will need it during hunting.”

Cold Bandages made from sewing skills!

Weed had made several rolls of bandages. The bandages could quickly stop bleeding and restore health. Weed gave them a backpack filled with bandages. Since none of the Geomchis had

healing skills, the bandages would prove to be a valuable lifeline for them.

After the Geomchis left, Weed's party returned to the Castle of the Dark Elves.

They met with Mapan to dispose of the japtem and then they checked over their items in preparation to hunt again.

Continuous repetitive hunting!

Weed knew all the details about the surrounding area and monsters in the Yuroki Mountains.

Now the overall level of the party was about 300.

‘It's just getting started.’

Weed clenched his fist.

It was time for crazy hunting.

Acquire items and gain experience. Thanks to his various production skills he could hunt faster and more efficiently.

However, Weed was going to have to wait.

Back in the city of the dark elves there were some uninvited guests waiting.

The pope candidate Alveron and the Paladins from the Church of Freya.

High priests were not allowed to leave the temple without at least 20 bodyguards.

The paladins placed a hand on their chest and bowed to Weed.

“Hello benefactor of the church.”

There were more than 100 paladins present giving him a salute.

“Wow, that’s so cool!”

Such a wonderful sight caught Surka by surprise. The Paladins were lined up in the middle of the day in full uniform. The high priests were also in a solemn posture.

Alveron took a step forwards from the high priests.

“The Church of Freya has ordered us to come and hear Weed’s answer.”

“ ... ”

Weed did not say anything. His party however was making a big fuss.

The Knights of the Church of Freya came to call him out.

“Ah, the Paladins of the Church of Freya!”

Irene and Romuna were amazed.

“They’re here for Weed!”

Once again, Hwaryeong admired Weed.

They had been hunting together, but Weed’s fame was beyond anything they could ever think of.

He was the one who obtain indisputable power in the Continent of Magic.

Then he laid out his own story in the Versailles Continent.

It was thrilling to listen to his stories of adventure!

It was incredible to learn these facts about Weed.

‘To think that the Knight of the Church of Freya would come. It doesn’t matter which church it’s from but it’s got to be someone very high up.’

Maylon looked at Weed like a frightened rabbit.

He had a calm look on his face.

There was a smile on his face but it looked a little bit annoyed.

He was taking something like this on calmly.

‘I really admire Weed. Not even the toughest adventurers would be able to take on those quests.’

Zephyr said with admiration.

“The Church of Freya came all the way out here from the temple just to hear Weed’s response.”

In actuality it was quite different. Weed wanted to run to anywhere that isn’t here. However, the Paladins approached them at a very quick pace and he was completely surrounded.

He forced on a rotten smile.

‘Why did they chase me out here...’

Weed frown at Alveron and said.

“What’s going on?”

“The cold and monster infested land of Morata. Ever since the fight against the True Blood Vampires, Paladins have been dispatched to police the province.”

“So what?”

For some time, Weed had stayed in Morata to combat the True Blood Vampires.

Ice stretched across the desolate land.

At the end the people that were turned to stone were awakened.

“Do you know the history of the North?”

“The north’s history?”

“It’s a very old story that is now long forgotten. The Kingdom of the Niflheim Empire.”

He roughly listened to the story.

‘This sounds like its another difficult quest.’

The side effects of high fame!

Even quests that were refused had to be taken.

“You need to cleanse the Valley of Death and recover the treasure of the Niflheim Empire to restore the King’s honor.”

“Treasure and the King’s honor?”

“That’s right. We need to leave to the North immediately.”

The priests, on Alveron’s command, would teleport them immediately.

To think that a situation like this would force him to stop adventuring!

Weed asked pathetically.

“Am I not allowed to bring companions again?”

He needed to take someone with him so he wouldn’t die alone in the north. They were recklessly heading to the land of ice after all. There was no way he was going to withstand the cold alone.

“You wish to bring your companions?”

“Yes.”

Weed looked back at this party. He looked at them with eyes of reminiscence.

‘The suffering needs to be split! Only the suffering of others brings me comfort.’

Pale and Zephyr’s shuddered.

‘Oh no! Please not me...! I wanted to rest if only a little bit.’

‘To be so cruel to your own fellow man!’

On the other hand, Maylon was thrilled and having all sorts of expectations about adventure.

‘This is an adventure! I finally leveled up enough to go on a real adventure! And it’s Weed’s adventure! This adventure is going to shake the entire continent.’

‘I’ll go anywhere Weed says. No matter how tough it was going to be.’

Whether it was the heat or the cold, Hwaryeong was willing to

withstand anything if it was with Weed. However, Alveron just shook his head.

“You won’t be able to pick all of them. I think that you’ll only be able to bring one person.”

“One person.”

Weed began to worry about who to bring when Seoyoon walked forward. It was actually Seechwi who firmly pushed her forwards.

“There you go!”

Weed was incredibly scared.

Why is she emitting such killing intent!

He would die if he traveled with her. However, it was hard to openly reject her.

Fear of Seoyoon!

To think about it, Seoyoon was the strongest and the most useful person to bring.

While he was hesitating, Alveron said.

“Well, that determines it. Begin to send us to the north!”

The senior priests triggered the teleport circle formation.

Weed, Seoyoon, the paladins and the priests were covered in a bright light.

*

Wah-3!

The angular jawed wyvern roared wildly.

“Kkeueoeuk!”

The Wyvern was mad.

They had to fly around Rhodium when their master went back to the Yuroki Mountains.

Geumini was flying on the back of the Wyverns to the Yuroki Mountains. There was a lot of sunlight so they were getting really hot.

The Wyverns were totally exhausted when they finally arrived at the Yuroki Mountains.

They could smell the fragrant scent of flowers.

Their favorite animals were in the Yuroki Mountains.

Deer and wild boars!

Their favorite food was tasty but not like horse, which they considered a delicacy.

A little inside the Yuroki Mountains, Centaurs would emerge from within.

The lower body of a horse and the upper body of a human.

Since they attacked with bows and spears they were difficult opponents for the Wyverns to raise their levels at.

But then their master left again.

This time to the Northern Continent!

It was much farther away than Rhodium.

“Kkeuruk kkeuruk!”

Wah-1 shivered his neck.

The Wyverns remembered their loyalty to their master.

“Master did give us life.”

“We must watch over our weak Sculptor.”

“The master is incompetent so we must protect him.”

“Let’s go protect our weak master.”

The Wyverns flew into the sky again.

The distant north.

The Wyverns flew in a straight line to the north despite the fact that they did not like the cold climate.

Geumini was gleaming on top of Wah-1.

“Golggol!”

*

The Cold Roses Expedition!

The 1650 people that were dreaming of the north were now experiencing all sorts of sufferings.

The first scouting party suffered a large ice storm as soon as they got to Ras Hill.

A natural disaster on the Versailles Continent!

The architects took out their shovels and started digging in the middle of the ice storm. It was not very easy to dig through the ice at all. However it was better to work hard instead of dying. The rest of the expedition used their weapons to dig into the ground. However, some of the expedition just stood around watching the ice storm.

“The storm lifts thick pile of snow off the ground into the air.”

“So that explains why pieces of ice and snow are falling from the sky.”

“The ice storm is created even though the sky is clear. So this is an ice and snow storm?”

The wind was gradually increasing, so they calmly waited for the ice storm to approach.

“Protect the body from the cold and prevent them from losing body warmth. Frost resistance!”

Wizards used protection magic.

“I did not think the first thing we would face would be an ice storm.”

“Since I came all the way to the north, there are bound to be good memories.”

“It’ll be a wonderful adventure story that I’ll be proud and willing to tell others.”

Their unknown confidence wasn’t based on anything.

Meanwhile artists, craftsmen, and the majority of the warriors from the expedition hid inside the pit.

“Ack, its cold!”

The cold caused their teeth to chatter!

Gaston could feel the northern chill even though he dug a hole. After a few moments, he caught a glimpse of the turmoil on the ground level.

“Well, this storm...doesn’t it look a bit dangerous? It’s still coming closer and it has tremendous power. The ground is shaking!”

“The wind is rapidly increasing!”

“The temperature is rapidly decreasing.”

“Ice shards! Ahhhh! Ice shards are incoming!”

“Halryun! Halryun is dead!”

“Ah! Help me!”

The terrifying ice storm swept across the Northern Expedition’s vanguard on the Ras Hill.

The cold wind and the ice stacked on repeatedly.

About 4 hours!

The expedition dug holes and had to wait hours in the cold.

Crackle crackle!

Even though Gaston dug a hole, he suffered a severe cold.

He was barely even alive. Most of the artists and craftsmen were weak and they caught colds so they died.

Most of the expedition did not know about the dangers of the north and that they would face something like this.

“I’m dying, it’s so cold.”

“The weather is so cold.”

After a long time, the ice storm passed and ice was thickly piled on top of the hill.

One of by people began to pop up.

“I’m still alive but is it over?”

“It was really cold. I thought that I was going to freeze to death down there.”

“We are literally going to freeze in this cold.”

Gaston cleaned off his face.

The artists, the craftsmen, and the majority of the users recognized the seriousness of the situation so they dug holes and hid in them.

Now they were extremely cold almost froze to death.

But thanks to Pavo, Gaston was able to survive. They managed to survive because Pavo was a good architect and was able to dig a deep hole.

Pavo shoveled as he moved his frozen lips.

“The group was nearly wiped out.”

“I don’t want to get a cold ever again. My hands and feet are still not moving properly.”

Gaston had very weak stamina and his body was shivering. There were small pieces of ice growing on his beard. After the ice storm passed, Ras Hill started to get really busy.

“Check how many people are alive.”

“We need a cleric here now!”

“We have serious patients over here!”

There were only 7 clerics sent with the vanguard. Of those, only 2 survived and they hurried to try and treat the others. However, there were very few who survived. Those who had been confident in their strength tried to stand and resist the ice storm. They had been ruthlessly beaten to death by sharp chunks of ice.

Only 130 people thought of digging up holes!

But even in the pits it was hard for the production classes to bear the cold from the ice storm.

Ferocious winds propel pieces of ice into the holes.

Unless the hole was very deep they would either die or be on the brink of death.

In this situation, the warriors and the knights had fared much better.

Gaston and Pavo from the production classes had nearly died while the majority of the magic professions died.

Eventually at the end of the storm there were only 65 people alive!

“My god! This is only the start and the damage is already huge.”

Kerberos sharpened his eyes.

However, being frustrated had to wait.

“Everyone in the party keep up your strength. We must hold out until the next group arrives.”

The vanguard was exhausted.

The situation was not good for the ones that were left.

“We need to hold out for four hours until the next group arrives. Until then, take it easy. Assassins and rangers should go scout the area.”

“Yes sir.”

“This is going to be merely reconnaissance, do not provoke any monsters.”

Many of the combat series users were either dead or disabled.

They would be unable to fight back if a large number of monsters come on a raid.

Suffering from cold and hunger!

Health and stamina recovery rates were not even half the normal amount.

They had to curl up and suffer until the next group arrives. The scouts from the vanguard cautiously spent their time. All of them were very afraid of monsters appearing. They were fortunate because there weren't any monster attacks as time passed.

Monsters in the north were known to be very strong and violent, but they also had high intellect.

Thanks to the passing ice storm, monster activity was considerably lower so there wouldn't be any attacks. Some time later, the second group arrived and they began to set up camp. Architects set up temporary homes made out of chunks of ice. Since the houses were made out of ice they would expect it to be cold. Surprisingly enough it was warm because they started a campfire.

“Pile on more wood!”

The ones from the vanguard that survived the ice storm wanted to relax in a safe place.

The expedition started off on the Ras Hill. There was going to be a need to come back here as well as repel attacks from monsters. To do this, it would be helpful to set up a base camp so that they could defend it easier.

However work progress was slow!

The elites from the Cold Roses Guild. Others were envious of the high level players but they were unfamiliar with cutting out ice. They would build poorly made houses that would collapsed when touched. To make matters worse, most of them couldn't even properly use a shovel. They could be seen shoveling.

They were only familiar with hunting monsters so they were building houses and shoveling for the very first time.

“Move out of the way!”

Geomchi364 was part of the second group to go to Ras Hill and he was holding a shovel.

“Who are you?”

“I’ll show you the proper way of using a shovel. Haah!”

Geomchi364 set the shovel lightly on the ground, then he stepped on it vigorously to transfer his weight onto it.

The way to use a shovel!

Pababarak!

The momentum was fearsome. It was like the shovel was alive and every time it moved shocks would pass through the ground.

The most optimal and efficient way to use a shovel.

“That is how you use a shovel.”

The people in the expedition were forced to nod towards

Geomchi364.

It was very easy for Geomchi364 to pile up ice.

They had already done something similar when they were making the pyramid.

Shoveling and bricklaying!

His efficiency was much higher since other people did not have the Construction skill.

Cadmus was working hard to make clothes for the expedition.

“For this kind of weather there needs to be warmer clothing.”

Thermal insulation was needed for dealing with cold temperatures.

They seamstress was forced to make clothing for the entire expedition.

Bards began to play instruments and sing.

Cold winds blowing

Ice is falling on the ground

Even then I love adventurous stories

Adventure and romance on Ras Hill.

More than 10 bards were singing.

It was enough to increase health and stamina.

“Seductive Dance!”

Despite the cold weather, the dancers were wearing bold clothing that showed off their navel and they were dancing.

A passionate and charming dance.

Their presence increased the expedition’s motivation.

The cooks were busy.

“Herbs?”

“We got our hands on a lot of quality materials in Rhodium.”

“No need to hold back on the meat. It needs to be eaten in larger quantities since stamina is going to drop very quickly. Put in

plenty of it.”

The chefs made a spicy stew to beat the cold.

It was very helpful since it was just what they needed.

Depp was holding a carving knife and glaring at a chunk of ice. When making a sculpture it was a good idea to have the shape in mind.

Pavo walked over, trembling in the cold.

“You called me Depp?”

“Yes sir.”

Depp politely greeted him.

He was still young and everyone was older than him.

“So what did you want?”

Depp was one of the sculptors so the expedition was wondering what they was doing looking at a chunk of ice.

He answered to Pavo.

“We are trying to make a sculpture.”

“”Sculpture?”

“Yea, that’s right.”

Sculptors were committed to going to harsh environments to make sculptures!

As an architect, Pavo was able to understand.

“Sounds like a lot of work. I’d love to stay and watch but it’s too cold here so if you don’t mind I’m going to return to the expedition.”

“Not at all.”

“I’ll come as soon as you finish the sculpture.”

“Yeah, I’ll come get you.”

Pavo walked through the snow to return to the expedition.

It was just 30 feet away from the hill but a ghastly wind blew.

Pavo had to endure the tough weather with his low health and stamina.

“Well, let’s start.”

Depp was very cold, but he could stand it since there was sculpting material everywhere.

‘The question is if my sculpting skill is good enough.’

In Rhodium, Depp managed to get a lot of fame!

His sculpting skills, however, were only Beginner Level 8.

‘I can’t tell if I’m going to fail unless I try.’

He didn’t give up and continued moving the sculpting knife.

Crunch!

Most sculptures had a defined shape.

Animals, plants, objects.

Up until now, Depp also made sculptures in the form of shapes. However, this time he was going to make something different.

First, he made a normal eagle. An eagle with sharp and clear eyes.

But he made it going for a dive.

It was going to eat delicious food.

The eagle was in an improbable situation.

Because of its speed, the heat turned into flames!

Flames were pouring out of the eagle's mouth.

At first he only made an eagle, but then he started embellishing on it.

A sculpture about fire!

The eagle with glazing hot flames!

A sculpture of fire that not even a strong wind could put out.

Depp finished up the sculpture of fire as a high gust of wind blew across the Ras Hill.

However, all he could feel was warmth.

The form of fire in ice.

Ttring!

Fine piece! You have completed The Fire of the Continent. The bleak northern lands. Monster filled the icelands. A humble artist's work was completed in the freezing cold. Unquenchable passion for sculpting. Imaginative use of sculpting solid ice despite rough workmanship. The artist has a certain charm to sculpting. He is relatively unknown so it will be difficult to find his works.

Artistic Value: 340

Options:

Those that see the Fire of the Continent receive 7% increased health and mana regeneration.

15% increased cold resistance.

Resistance to magic increases.

Campfires last longer.

Increases the power of fire related species.

Does not overlap with other sculptures.

The number of fine pieces completed up till now: 1

- Sculpting skills have improved.

- Fame has increased by 320.

- Art has increased by 56.
- Stamina has increased by 4.

Depp was startled when he finished the sculpture.

“I...I did it!”

It was the first fine piece he had made in his entire life.

The sculpture that Depp made was like rain in the middle of a drought for the expedition.

The expedition was shocked when they saw the sculpture.

“You went and created an ice sculpture! It’s the first time I’ve seen a sculpture this awesome.”

“Moreover, the cold has been reduced by a lot.”

“I think I’m going to be able to live now!”

“My abnormal status is going back to normal.”

The extreme cold that was plaguing the expedition was changed.

People did not expect much when the artists and craftsmen joined the expedition.

That together they would make things a little better? They did not believe that the artists and craftsmen had the ability to do so. It was the same for the sculptors. It was very hard and laborious work. They did not have very good attack power and they didn't earn money well.

A lot of artists live their lives in poverty in Rhodium and sculptors were not recognized either.

Sculptures were considered a trifling sight.

“You have talent in sculpting.”

“From now on, we need sculptors.”

“Wouldn't that be nice?”

Sculptors were a profession that could overcome harsh environments. That was the fantasy that was planted into sculpting now. Artists could show off their skills anywhere.

They were an occupation that could show off the skills from a wide variety of fields.

Finally, Oberon joined the expedition on Ras Hill.

All 1650 users were gathered in the north.

Before, the production classes were ignored by the expedition. Now they were actually coming with them to the north. It was thanks to their active participation in the expedition.

Oberon nodded his head at the way the expedition had changed.

“The way people were chosen is really well done.”

Kerberos scratched his face and laughed.

“I had a funny feeling when I accepted them. Hunting now will be a lot easier now since we picked up people for the expedition in Rhodium.”

They were usually considered bad classes but now they were really impressive.

“We ought to include sculptors on the next expedition.”

Oberon had not expected much from the artists.

The expedition finally began to move in earnest.

Oberon dispatched the expedition in all directions.

Ten different teams were sent from the expedition!

A group of adventurers, knights, and clerics among others found a nearby village.

They obtained information and the opportunity to receive quests from the village.

The expedition would be risking their lives against the monsters in the northern continent. However, even if things did go well, they chose not to do it.

They could not imagine what they would do if they ran out of stamina in the cold or starve to death without food.

They wandered through the ice and the snow. Some of the wizards were specialized in ice magic.

“Ice Bolt!”

Due to the weather, their magic was much more powerful than before.

They, however, received strong opposition.

“Stop using ice magic!”

“Are you trying to freeze and kill us?”

They were the knights and warriors that tasted death by freezing.

There were monsters in the north that had a high tolerance to cold and were stronger in combat than they would think.

Ice cave!

A group of adventurers were able to find an ice cave. They were able to enter after breaking the ice that was blocking the entrance.

“There seems to be something in there.”

“Let’s check it out.”

A number of the expedition died because they didn’t know that they were heading towards fearsome monsters. The ice monsters were able to maximize their strength in the cold weather against the expedition. Some of them were barely able to conquer dungeons and find a little treasure but it was hardly worth it. After suffering for 10 days, discontent broke out.

“It’s been nothing but suffering.”

“I’ve already died twice.”

“There’s too much snow on the ground and I can barely walk.”

No matter where they went, the snow went up to their knees. To make matters worse, the horses that the expedition had prepared had frozen and died. Needless to say, they were tired and reached the end of the rope!

“I’m just going to close my eyes.”

“It’s too far to walk without knowing the exact location.”

People became tired of the tedious and painful expedition one after another.

They were looking forwards to adventure and fighting, but instead they were starving and deliberately avoiding monsters.

They couldn’t tell which monsters were strong or weak.

That was because of the lack of information.

They dispatched a group to gather information about the surrounding area but contact with them had broken off.

“I’m better off just going back.”

“I’m sick of this.”

They were divided and confused!

Each guild began to branch off and do their own activities. Although it was the Cold Roses Guild that led the expedition, they had already lost many because of lack of trust. The expedition was going to rapidly collapse. It was on the verge of collapse because everyone was doing whatever they pleased. Many of the mid-level players that made up the expedition had also failed to come back.

Chapter 9: Valley Of Death

Whiiiing!

Shortly after he opened his eyes, Weed walked out of the Teleport Gate and found himself inside a cave. Cold wind blew in from the cave's entrance.

“Uu, Cold!”

It was a situation he had to get used to every day!

Due to having experience shivering in the cold, he could be unfazed by strong, cold winds.

“Looks like I had to return to this place eventually.”

The North.

He ended up coming to this harsh place with Seoyoon.

Weed changed his clothes quickly to avoid catching a cold.

It was clothing made from the furry leather of the Yetis!

It did not look all that appealing from the outside, but it provided

good insulation.

‘Being warm in the winter really is the best.’

Some people tried to look cool by wearing light clothing.

Weed looked upon those people and laughed at them.

‘They’re going where while wearing clothing like that?’

Traditionally, thicker clothes were the best. Warm clothes that did not let any cold air in.

New clothing made from good, light materials had to change as fashion moved on.

However, the clothing he wore was very special.

Clothing stuffed with a lot of fur and cotton!

It resembled the clothing that the older men who sailed on the boats near beaches wore. It was the thickest clothing. Because the clothing is thick and durable, you can wear it every year.

As a negative side effect, one would never appear to be young while wearing clothes like these!

The first time in his life, he had been called an "old man" while he was out on his milk delivery route.

It was a painful memory filled with shock, something he would never want to recall.

“Cough.”

As Weed searched his surroundings, he found Alveron and Seoyoon.

The pope-candidate Alveron. It was comforting to travel with him due to his high level and his knowledge of higher-tier divine magic.

Without Alveron, it would have been impossible to win against the True Blood Vampire Clan.

This time, he had to rely on both Alveron and Seoyoon in order to complete the quest.

Weed faced Alveron and gave him an order.

“It’s cold. For now, see if you can get a campfire going.”

“Yes.”

After Alveron politely answered, he gathered some nearby wood and started a fire. Kind and pure Alveron fulfilled his orders without complaint.

Meanwhile, Seoyoon's lips turned a deep blue.

Alveron was wearing a robe that did not allow the elements through, because he was a candidate for papacy. Weed was similarly wearing Yeti leather, which let him withstand the cold to some extent.

However, Seoyoon did not have specially insulating clothing, so she could only remain exposed to the full brunt of the extreme cold.

Weed pulled out sewing equipment and materials from his backpack.

Since he had no choice but to travel with Seoyoon, he was going to make her some clothes. Luckily, there were some materials leftover from making the Geomchis' clothes.

Weed cut the leather and, with more care than usual, began sewing.

Ttiring!

Women's Leather Clothes:

Durability 80/80

Defense 25Clothing made from a long-lived black boar.

A tailor with great insight made this clothing using intermediate sewing materials.

Since this clothing is not thick, it allows natural movement of the arms and legs and is comfortable to be active.

Requirements:

Level 250

Options :

Agility +20

Arrows are harder to detect.

When worn by Dancers, effect of dancing increases by 3%.

Weed finished sewing the clothing, and held it out to Seoyoon.

“Please...wear this.”

All while trying to force the unnatural politeness!

The clothing that Weed made was average leather clothing. It

was something that one could wear underneath heavy armor.

While the wizard and priest classes lacked the strength to do so, the classes that could wear heavy armor usually wore leather armor in addition to that, resulting in an even more exceptional defense.

He made the clothes using Seoyoon's measurement, which he already knew in advance.

However, Seoyoon did not take the clothes.

“ ... ”

She fixedly stared at the clothes that Weed held out for her.

A thought passed through Weed's mind.

‘She must have some difficulty receiving it from an acquaintance.’

There was a time when they traveled together for a number of days while he was the orc Karichwi, but Seoyoon was unaware of that fact. Since she only recalled meeting him while eating barbeque at the Instructor's log cabin, it was understandable.

With those thoughts, Weed smiled favorably towards her.

“It’s okay. You may wear it. Since it was made particularly for your use, please hurry up and take it.”

However, Seoyoon shook her head without saying anything.

‘Why is she behaving like that?’

Weed, puzzled, followed her line of vision. Seoyoon was expressionlessly looking at the Yeti leather clothing he was wearing.

‘No way...!’

The fleeting thought that passed in a second!

Weed investigated Seoyoon’s location. She was right in front of the campfire. She was so close to the fire that if she moved a little closer she would burn.

‘She must hate the cold. That means the reason why she refuses to wear this is...’

The reason she refused was not that she found accepting the favor to be difficult. She was silently demanding the slightly warmer clothing.

The clothing that Weed made properly reflected the exposure of women’s clothing, and he did not layer it in to reduce the amount

of materials used.

She keenly observed this and wanted different clothes.

Weed had no choice but to make her a new set of clothes. Using the leftover materials, he added on some layers and eliminated the exposed areas of the clothing to make thicker clothes.

It was at this point that Seoyoon grabbed the clothes and went behind a boulder to change.

After somehow completing the preparations for weathering the cold, Weed turned to ask Alveron a question.

“Where is the Valley of Death?”

“It’s known as the Sendeim Valley.”

“It has an original name. Is that place also related to the Undead Army?”

Weed asked the question because most of the high-ranking quests he received had involved the Undead Army in some way.

However, Alveron shook his head.

“The Church is investigating the Undead Army that Bar Khan

controlled. They revealed that this quest and the Undead Army are not related. It involves the ancient Niflheim Empire. You should be able to obtain more information on the Sendeim Valley from the Morata Village's Elder."

"I see."

Weed went to the outside of the cave.

A large darkness was visible in the distance.

It was the Morata Castle, where he fought against the True Blood Vampires.

It seemed as though they splendidly renovated the houses in the outskirts of the manor, which were ruins in the past. The residents were also moving about here and there.

"Then let's go."

Weed trudged towards the village of Morata.

Alveron and Seoyoon followed him.

The village residents welcomed him warmly.

"Warrior! We welcome your return to this place. We will never

forget the grace by which you saved our lives.”

With the completion of the quest, the village revived.

Weed was the village’s best contributor! Thanks to that, he could receive a lot of favor from the village residents. Weed began by seeking the Elder.

The largest house that, in the past, was completely destroyed so that not even a skeleton could be found was repaired and became the Elder’s house.

Inside the house, the wood in the fireplace was burning, spreading a warm atmosphere.

“Warrior, I sincerely thank you for revisiting us in these hard times. “

“I wanted to come again even if that wasn’t the case. I’m glad to see that you and the village residents are doing well.”

“It’s thanks to the protection of Freya’s knights and priests.”

Monster infested villages could become invaded at any time.

As in the case of Baran village, monsters could kidnap people and force them to become their slaves. However, thanks to the efforts of the Church of Freya, this village became safe.

The Elder brought out a basket laden with sweet potatoes that were puffing with steam.

“As it so happened to be, it’s about dinner time; would you care to join?”

“I won’t refuse.”

Weed sat down at the table and began to peel the sweet potatoes.

Seoyoon also sat down next to him and quietly began peeling sweet potatoes and eating them.

In the past, there was a time they also ate together like this in the Instructor’s log cabin.

‘Every time we meet, we seem to end up eating something together. If we’re this tied together, could it be fate?’

The sweet potatoes that they put into a campfire and grilled. The sweet potato eaten at night was puffy with steam and had an aesthetic golden meat.

Weed took a mouthful of the sweet potato.

It was savory while being sweet!

‘It would’ve been perfect if I had some kimchi to go with this.’

He had enough proficiency in cooking to make some kimchi. He also had the necessary ingredients.

However, it was impossible to start marinating kimchi when one wanted to eat it. That was why special foods, such as kimchi, usually sold at exceedingly high prices.

Because it became a widely spread universal food that even the Westerners could eat, it was available in most restaurants.

People loved to eat kimchi to the point where chefs would learn how to make it first.

Weed diligently peeled and ate the sweet potatoes. Ever since coming to the North, there was very little to eat, so they were in a hungry state.

Alveron tried to eat politely at first, but he started to eat hastily. After he started traveling with Weed, he began to gain an appreciation for food.

The basket filled with sweet potatoes began to rapidly empty.

Weed and Alveron did most of the eating, but the amount Seoyoon was putting away was also substantial. It was then that

Weed looked at the Elder's expression.

A mooch must always gauge the state of his benefactor in order to live and eat.

The glaring eyes and the furrowed brows!

Unsurprisingly, he was feeling sensitive about the dwindling amount of sweet potatoes.

Weed put the sweet potato down and asked a question.

“I want to hear more information on the Sendeim Valley.”

Even without receiving a quest, the Valley of Death offered monsters to hunt and treasures to find. However, it is better to obtain one because it offers necessary information and rewards.

The Elder looked out of the far window, as if to throw away the attachment he had to the sweet potatoes. A layer of white snow covered the entire view.

“Are you aware of the past glory of our Niflheim Empire?”

“No, I'm not aware of it.”

Weed had separately studied the history of the Versailles

continent. It was the stories of the rise and fall of each kingdom and their respective heroes.

If he comprehended the background stories, it would help with obtaining important quests. However, in this kind of situation, it was better to feign ignorance. That way, one could hear more stories, and it could serve as an important hint to another question. The Elder made a sad face.

The diminishing sweet potatoes might have had a big part in that sadness. He could be regretting the invitation he extended to Weed and his party.

“When we were caught in that evil curse that left us petrified, the Niflheim Empire was still a thriving nation. It wasn’t as cold as it is now, and it was very suitable for living in. I was one of the Niflheim Empire’s border aristocrats.”

It could be said that all of the village residents in the Morata province were important people to the history. If seen from another view, it as an important village that had no choice but to contain many quests.

If the North became explored in earnest, the village would become completely crowded with adventurers.

“However, due to a sudden invasion of monsters at the capital when I was young, the residents faced annihilation. When the emperor, who swore always to live honorably, had to put his life at stake, he became cowardly and abandoned the capital while fleeing

with his guards. The monsters left to chase after the fleeing emperor, and there were rumors that they eventually caught up and captured him. The place where this occurred was the Sendeim Valley.”

“The emperor must have died by now.”

“Yes he would have likely died by now. Due to the cowardly death of the emperor, the empire lost its constitutionality and shattered, while the nobles entered a power struggle that consumed them all. However, these are all simply uncertain rumors! We can’t find out the truth. That’s why we’d like to find out the truth, whatever it may be, of what happened back then.

Ttiring!

Truth and GloryThe Niflheim Empire produced many stories of glory, which became broken. Emperor Eben Niflheim VI was an outstanding knight, and was a warrior who did not know the meaning of retreat. However, he was condemned for being unable to maintain his chivalry in the face of his death.

Found out the true history of events that occurred in the Sendeim Valley.

Difficulty: A

Reward:

The treasure of the Niflheim Empire

Quest Requirements:

Only righteous may take this quest.

Must be able to withstand the extreme cold.

Another quest with a difficulty of “A” rank appeared.

Weed breathed a sigh of relief.

‘Still, it’s lucky that it’s only an ‘A’ rank.’

His thanks that it was only an “A” ranked quest, and not the “S” ranked quest that was only known to exist, swept through his body.

Weed furtively glanced at Seoyoon.

Clear eyes and an unblemished and translucent skin.

She, who had the beauty that would make people hesitate to call her pretty out of fear for disrespect. She was exuding a mystical charm that was hard to describe.

Although she was wearing the simple leather clothes that Weed made, she radiated elegance. Seoyoon had the kind of absolute beauty that could turn any clothing into a luxurious masterwork.

However, all Weed could see was a simple brawler.

‘Even though it looks like I received another hard quest this time, since I have a person who could help, it’ll be alright.’

Judging by what he saw, Seoyoon’s combat ability was no joke. Powerful skill, outrageous vitality, indefatigable stamina, and even surprising damage!

As one of the combat classes, it could be said that only the strengths were gathered and put together.

Although there players, like Weed or the Geomchis, who also displayed outstanding melee abilities, it was not bad to rely on the class’ skills.

The flexible and gentle movements that were unique to women.

Combined with flawless execution of the high-end skills!

It was a faster and safer way of hunting, if one had the mana.

On top of that, as Seoyoon engaged in a fight, her mood shifted. With her eyes glittering while she fought, it was the specialty of the Berserker class.

As a Berserker, whenever a monster was killed, health and mana were replenished. While the amount was negligible, but if one

were to fight in a place with many monsters, the results were overwhelmingly different.

If the Martial Artist class the Geomchis chose was strong against small groups of enemies, then the Berserker class was specialized for defeating multiple monsters without rest.

Since that Seoyoon was with him, Weed could feel much less pressure from the quest.

“I will go to the Sendeim Valley and investigate once I arrive.”

You accepted the quest.

After readily accepting the quest, the Elder became very friendly.

“Thank you. That you’re willing to do such a hard task for us...”

“It’s nothing. It was something I had to do. Rather, I want to apologize for being unable to come to visit sooner. If, in the future, there are any more difficult tasks, please look for me.”

Hunting was great, but quest rewards were also valuable!

Since he could make money off the ad revenue from uploading it to the Hall of Fame or entering into a contract with a broadcasting station, it was a good proposition.

In order to raise the intimacy sufficiently higher, he used the situation. As if to demonstrate the substantial effect it had, the Elder's face showed admiration for the younger man.

“Until now, those who wanted to learn the truth dispatched an innumerable amount of expeditions and knights, but none of them returned. After that, the Sendeim Valley came to be known as the Valley of Death.”

“ ... ”

After hearing the Elder's words, Weed wanted to scream.

‘Aren't you supposed to tell me those kinds of secrets ahead of time?!’

However, the truth was this level of difficulty was to be expected of a rank “A” difficulty quest. Since he always started from the ground up, he had nothing to fear. There was no reason to change his mind after coming this far. The Elder continued speaking.

“Then, this person will also come along, right?”

He was referring to Seoyoon.

The girl who was making a face that was colder than the cold North!

However, in order to receive the shared quest, she needed to join the party.

Weed extended a hand.

“Please join my party.”

You invited Seoyoon-nim to the party.

Because she had joined another party as though they were merging when she was with Seechwi, it was her first time getting an individual invitation to join a party.

However, Seoyoon just stayed as she was.

Weed began to have a sense of foreboding.

‘There’s no way she’d refuse to join the party after coming this far, right?’

It could turn into a situation where she would not accept the quest and left Weed to suffer by himself!

He began to think there was a good possibility of it happening.

Of course, Seoyoon was not as cold a person as she seemed on the outside.

Although she liked fighting, she was not greedy. One could tell that from observing how she did not fight a monster unless it attacked her first, even if it was a rare monster that came out once per day and dropped a good item.

However, Seoyoon was completely indifferent to these things.

As much as she never uttered a single word while following the orc Karichwi around, she could have ignored Weed's quest.

As Weed was getting nervous, Seoyoon, herself, lightly put her hand on top of Weed's.

You have gained a new member in your party.

Even Seoyoon could not understand her emotions. That she would be travelling like this with a stranger, and an unfamiliar man at that, was unthinkable.

While this happened thanks to the unknowing Seechwi's encouragement, even taking that into consideration, if the person did not want it they would have separated here.

‘Strangely, I’m not uncomfortable.’

Seoyoon became puzzled.

That was the person she had only ever met in the Instructor's log cabin. However, for some reason, he exuded a familiar feeling.

*

Ever since she hunted with Seechwi's other colleagues she felt this feeling.

"Lee Rien, hurry up with Seoyoon's treatment!" (Lee Rien is the name of the nurse treating her.)

Seoyoon did not speak a word. Even if you say that her health was deteriorating, she could not express it in words.

Whenever that happened after battles, Weed always made sure that they had spare time, so that she could receive her treatment.

Whenever the fights ended, he applied bandages and repaired armor and weapons.

There was also a time in the past when she had this feeling.

The feeling she got when she travelled with orc Karachwi at the Yunopu Gorge.

Orc Karachwi, whose face was appallingly ugly, but whose eyes were good-natured.

Even the way they repaired weapons was very similar.

She did not talk; she carefully observed the facial expressions and eyes every time she saw someone. Although she never engaged in conversation, she was able to determine people's moods and temperaments because of her observations.

At that moment she felt the same vibe coming from Weed that she felt from Karichwi

Seoyoon didn't understand Weed's intentions, but she knew it was him who took the appearance of Karichwi, who observed and protected her.

Although it is not always accurate, she trusted her feelings and instincts. Which was why she chose to travel with with.

*

After Weed left the Elder's house, he walked around the Morata Village and gathered information. The villagers and Freya's Paladins and Priests became his goal. The Freya's Priests had remained in Morata Village in order to protect it.

For now, Weed was gathering supplies for the journey and was asking the storeowners about information on the Sendeim Valley.

“Sendeim Valley? It's a place that became better known as the Valley of Death. They say that there are a lot of monsters there.”

“Can you tell me what kind of monsters?”

“Hmm... There will probably be some Ice Trolls. The Ice Trolls often gather in places like the Valley of Death.”

Ice Troll!

They have an amazing ability to regenerate health, and since their ability to use the extreme cold is great, they are not easy monsters to fight against.

However, Weed would not cower at this level of danger.

Whatever the case, they could hunt the Ice Trolls by luring them one at a time as long as it was a valley and not a dungeon. It might take a long time, but using bait to lure them one by one and beating them was not an impossible task.

Of course, there would probably some viciously strong ones, but since that was a daily occurrence, they had no reason to fear.

‘Ice Troll blood sells for a lot. It offers better effects than most common medicinal herbs, and it can also be used to make potions.’

Weed, who tried to estimate a value for everything!

He was not scared of strong monsters; he was scared of monsters

that only dropped leather. In fact, he found nothing to be as horrific as a monster that dropped only cheap leathers.

‘If it’s a valley, the landmarks will be extremely important.’

If you could shoot an arrow from one side of the valley to the other, it could turn out to be a much easier hunt than expected.

However, if the Ice Trolls dominated the upper portion of the valley and expanded their territory, then it may be much more challenging.’

Weed had no information on their territory.

A mission to recapture the monster’s domain!

There was no other way besides having an effective siege.

The situation was different than fighting the True Blood Vampire Clan with Alveron and a few Freya’s Paladins in the past.

Back then, the number of vampires was small, and there wasn't a feeling of a siege.

Even though Weed used different words to ask the residents, he received the same information.

“If you’re looking for the Valley of Death, it’s quite far from here. At best, it’ll take 1 month of travel. Why does it take so long to get there? That’s because the Niflheim Empire’s territory is vast.”

“Ice Troll? Of course, there should be some Ice Trolls. However, it’s not only the monsters you need to be wary of. This is a story I heard from my grandfather, but there is supposed to be a treasure storehouse in there. That’s why there will be much more dangerous hazards.

Monsters and the chances of dying to the myriad of traps!

“They say that some kind of terrible feeling spills out from there every morning. Due to that, even some flora cannot grow near the Valley of Death.”

“There have been people who also spotted something that was pure white and flying around near the Valley of Death.”

“I don’t know very well, but they say that the flying thing was enormous. They say that the body alone was over 300 meters long. Since it’s so unbelievable the people who saw it must have mistaken the length.”

The Freya's Paladins also had something to say.

“The Valley of Death? That place is very dangerous. Monsters other than Ice Trolls also gather there.”

“From the church’s investigation, it seems likely that it’s a place that’s congested with monsters.”

“Given how many monsters gather there, no matter who saw it they would say that it could only be an unusual situation. There must be a boss monster leading the others. It can’t be a normal monster since it has been leading the other monsters for several hundreds of years, so you must pay extra care. It would behoove you to avoid the boss monster at all costs.”

“Since the blessing of the Goddess Freya is with you, may your courage remain unfaltering.”

As Weed was gathering the information, he got a general picture of the situation in the Valley of Death.

The Paladins from the Church of Freya usually did not falter over typical matters.

If these Paladins were wary enough of this boss monster to be frightened, then there was no doubt that it was a very high level.

‘It probably won’t be easy.’

However, one must experience everything firsthand in order to gain an accurate understanding of it. There was no need to feel diminished when you were not even sure of anything in the first place.

‘There must be some way through this.’

Even with the information on the Valley of Death, there was no way to obtain more details in the nearby villages. In places that were widely separated like this it was impossible to obtain anything other than very simple information.

While he was taking Seoyoon and Alveron around Morata Village in this way, Weed met a small girl.

Prina!

It was the little girl who was turned into a statue by the Vampire Lord Tori.

The small and cute Prina was carrying a small bag.

“Hey old man, you’re the one that saved me, right?”

That old man title he had no choice but to hear often.

However, Weed smiled widely.

“That’s right. I’m glad to see that you’re up and about.”

“Thank you. I think that being turned into stone is a very sad thing. The heart doesn’t beat, blood doesn’t flow, the body that

hardens and becomes a prison to your body...Oh! Do you happen to have an interest in flowers?”

“Flowers?”

Of course, Weed had no interest in flowers. However, he would never answer like that.

“Flowers have a good scent. I love the peaceful scene of butterflies and honeybees hovering around beautifully blossoming flowers. There’s no pleasure like lying in a field of grass and taking in the refreshing air.”

This was Weed, who would become immersed in hunting in a dark dungeon while only carrying a torch.

A dungeon with stale air, disgusting smells, and unknown things appearing the further one travels. Weed found pleasure in hunting like a maniac in places like that.

It was a depraved sensitivity!

However, he always showed care when dealing with Prina. It was because he did not want to shatter the dreams of a little girl yet.

Prina became happy while clapping her hands.

“Is that so? That’s great. Then will you listen to a small favor of

mine?”

“Speak your will.”

“I heard that you were headed to the Valley of Death. Do you think you could sow some seeds there? If only the flowers of hope would bloom in the place where the aura of evil and death gather. Looking after these small seeds until they bloom into flowers will take a lot of effort. If they do blossom, then my newly-made friend would be happy.”

Ttiring!

Prina's FlowerThe little girl who loves to cultivate the land, sow seeds, and watch them sprout through the ground wants to be a farmer in the future.

If you sow the little girl's seeds and nurture the plants so that they repaint the Sendeim Valley, the little girl will be forever happy and introduce you to her friend.

Difficulty: A

Reward:

Introduction to Prina's friend.

The plants that sprout from the sown seeds.

Quest Requirements:

Must have a particular amount of care and vigilance in order to protect the flowers from monsters and let them grow in safety.

Weed looked at the seeds that Prina held out with a huge sense of devastation.

The burlap bag that the little girl was dragging about! It was filled to the brim with seeds.

It was an amount that was hard to count.

It was a request to make a field of flowers with this at the Valley of Death.

The ambition of the little girl who wanted to cover the entire world with flowers!

‘It’s an extremely difficult request.’

It was a hobby to plant a few cluster of flowers.

If the quest was only getting hundreds of seeds to bloom, then it would be hard, but possible. However, if the number was in the tens, hundreds of thousands, then this was not a typical job.

In addition, that he had to protect the flowers from the monsters while they were growing made this a formidable task.

‘I have to sow these seeds in the Valley of Death. I get why it’s difficulty is “A” rank.’

Weed was about to shake his head and refuse. Setting aside the issue the high difficulty, it seemed as though there would be many tedious tasks. Suddenly, the quietly following Seoyoon grabbed the burlap bag that contained the seeds.

“Thanks, big sister!”

The party member Seoyoon has accepted the quest.

Seoyoon was always like that. She had not verbally accepted even a single quest, but she never refused someone’s request.

In the end, Weed had no choice and accepted the quest.

“I also love to plant seeds and cultivate the land. Thanks for requesting such a pleasant task.”

You have accepted the quest.

His face was crying, but he was forcing a smile!

It became a rotten smile as time wore on.

*

Lee Hayan registered on Royal Road filled with expectations.

She chose her character name to be Yurin.

It was a cute, youthful, and feminine name. It was definitely not a name that was meant to be youthful.

Yurin was an abbreviation of sorts.

Human Rights Violation!

“Monsters! I will defeat them all.”

Yurin wanted to earn a lot of money. She also liked to gather as many items as possible. Since she had a lot of time before she could attend university, she intended to work hard and raise her levels.

Yurin selected Rhodium as her starting city. It was because she had the expectation that, if she was lucky, she might be able to meet Weed.

“Does anyone want to hunt with us in front of the village?”

“We’re looking for a Minister.”

“I’m a sculptor who is looking for a party. I have a 7 damage sculpting knife.”

“I’m a level 35 Bard who has the “Song of Healing” and wants to join a party. It would be ideal to find a party that will hunt for about a week.”

The people were crowding Rhodium’s central square as usual.

There were many beggars to one side, but there were also people looking for parties in some spots.

On the other hand, there were thousands of people who flocked the plaza where there were beautiful sculptures dressed in various costumes. There were many third-year high school students you just passed University exams; wearing beginner clothes and staring wide-eyed.

However, Weed had unfortunately left Rhodium by this point.

Yurin thought that it was for the best.

“Good. It doesn’t matter. I didn’t want to start the game by owing anyone, anyway.”

Yurin rolled up her sleeves and looked for a job to make money. When one starts to play Royal Road, they cannot leave the city for the first 4 weeks.

She wanted to make some money during this time.

“We’re looking for help in a restaurant who is deeply interested in cooking.”

“My child loves books. Is there someone who will read to him about cool heroes?”

“Hm, Lately, there have been too many flies in my store. Do you think you could catch flies for 5 hours for me? I’ll compensate you with 20 copper.”

This was about the level that Yurin could find work for.

Like Weed, she also quietly hit scarecrows to train. However, the stats that she raised also resulted in training her body.

‘I should become a pretty female mage.’

The magician that Yurin wanted to become was an omnipotent mage.

They used large-scale, wide area-of-effect magic in order to turn hundreds of monsters to dust. The mages that could call upon rain

in dry lands, destroy mountainsides, and studied highly offensive spells!

Note:

The Valley of Death is called "Sendeim Valley"

Book 09: Conquest

Chapter 1: Night In Morata

As the moon emerged in the night sky, Weed was stirring with a ladle.

In the past, the True Blood Vampire Clan inhabited the bleak and luxurious black giant castle in the background, but now he was cooking in the middle of Morata village.

In the north, traveling in the night was no better than suicide.

Because he didn't know the area very well, it was best not to move around and risk stumbling into strong monsters. It was also much more tiring to endure the cold, during the night.

Even though he had eaten the sweet potatoes he was given by the village elder, the fullness bar was gradually disappearing. Thus, Weed decided to cook some food in Morata.

'Better make some nice, hot food that can defeat the cold.'

The meat of the various beast he had hunted in the Yurokina Mountains, vegetables and seasonings were all mixed to make a soup!

'Mixing makes it much more delicious.'

The open-air fire burned majestically, with a pot hanging above it to be used for boiling the broth.

Depending on the fire, the food can be prepared in numerous ways.

Weed started slicing the meat, before dropping it into the pot.

As soon as he dropped the toppings into the broth, it changed to a reddish colour.

A spicy smell exploded into the area.

Gulp

He saw the Pope candidate, swallow his saliva. Even though he was a priest of Freya, it was hard for him to resist his appetite in that situation.

'This time I will be able to give you some real cooking for a change.' Weed thought as he glanced a look at Seoyoon. She was squatting next to the fire, watching the broth boil.

In the past, they had never had time to cook any meals properly, as they were always in a hurry to get back to the Yurokina Mountains.

Being an Orc decreased his craftings skills tremendously.

As Karichwi the Orc, his dexterity was also weakened a little, which also affected his cooking skill. It was however sufficient for grilling meat.

Seoyoon delightedly ate the grilled meat.

'Previously whenever we met each other, we were so busy hunting that I didn't get an opportunity to cook. We just ate the bread that I had made beforehand. Therefore, even if it's this meal, it might still appease her.'

'Through the means of this meal I could apologize to Seoyoon.'

Paladins and Priests started gathering around the place where Weed was cooking.

The paladins started exerting divine power, in order to keep a straight face! The noble priests drooled at the look of the mixed soup. The ideal of maintaining dignity was lost in front of a temptation this big.

Then the villagers of Morata started to come out of their houses, even though Weed had thought they were sleeping.

"This savory smell....."

"I don't know how long it's been since I smelled anything this

good.”

The villagers started to stare at the pot with greedy eyes. The children were grabbing their stomachs.

Weed shook his head.

'I can't give this to anyone.'

'To obtain the seasonings and cooking ingredients costs money. Therefore I have no intention of handing any of it over.'

At this moment, the children started to cry.

“Mom, I’m hungry!”

“Bear with it for a little longer. Your father’s going to be home soon.”

“Is it grass again?”

“Yes, he said he’ll be going a bit south of here where you can easily pick up good tree bark and grass roots, so just wait a little longer.”

“WAAAH!!!”

The children burst into tears.

Even though Morata was no longer in ruins, it was still really poor. Due to the cold they could not grow crops, and since it was inhospitable like the towns in the areas around it, trade wasn't improving either.

The town was just barely scraping by!

It wasn't truly dead, but only by living off the distributions from the church of Freya, did the village manage to survive.

In actuality, for the village elder to hand out the sweet potatoes was an astounding act of kindness.

Weed frowned.

'Why did we, out of all the places have to come somewhere this poor.'

Memories of barely being able to feed the paladins in the past started to surface.

'I struggled so much in order to fill their bellies. If this had been a normal situation I wouldn't even have been noticed.'

However, the children were starving.

In the past, there had also been a time when Weed had starved. It wasn't because he didn't want to eat, but because rice had run out. Therefore, without any other options, he had just clutched his stomach.

After such an experience, even though he could endure many other things, he couldn't endure hunger.

With tears of regret he called the children over.

“Hey kids, I think the cooking is all done. You can come and eat now.”

“Can we really eat it?”

“Of course. This uncle put a lot of effort into making it, just so I could give it to you...”

“Thank you!”

Because Weed had put plenty of rice and herbs into the mixed soup, there was enough to be divided.

“Wow! Wow!”

Because the children had already been starving for a few days, they ate the meal very fast.

The villagers also slowly walked up to the fire. They were too proud to say it, but their faces gave off a touching expression, showing that they would be very happy if they were given food.

Weed was very conflicted with this.

'If I want to feed them all, a great supply of ingredients and seasoning is required, and I don't want to personally provide that.'

However you looked at it, it was a huge loss. Making food for everyone would mean spending a great deal of money.

'If only I hadn't learned cooking... then I wouldn't be in this troublesome situation.'

Until now, he hadn't regretted learning the cooking skill.

However, the villagers of Morata were severely starving.

'At least I'll be recognized, and relieve my conscience. I was confident that I would live without these kind of situations. However, the paladins and priests of Freya are watching.'

Alveron came and said "In this difficult situation you made food, and gave it away. You are a very good person."

“ ... ”

“Even if you only have a single proper meal, it will bring you hope. Hope that anything can be achieved. If you don’t have hope in your hearts, it will be as if you are dead. Devotion and hope brings will. I, the paladins, the priests and the Morata villagers will never forget the kindness you have shown us.

“...”

Weed wanted to find a way to stop Alveron’s mouth from prattling on.

The priests and paladins had great respect for him.

Benefactor of the village, and the great adventurer who found the holy treasures of Freya!

Weed’s eyes began to tremble.

‘There will eventually be some damages, so it might as well be here.’

Avoiding to spend money now was impossible, so there was no need to stand idle.

Weed smiled brightly as he stirred the soup.

“If there is anything I can do to increase the prosperity and peace of the continent of Versailles, of course I will do it.”

“Now that is a true response from Weed.”

Alveron's, the paladins' and the priests' respect for Weed increased even further.

Weed pulled out all the food ingredients he had. He took out all the meat, grass and vegetables he got from hunting in the Yuroki Mountains.

“Just wait a little bit longer, then I'll cook up some food that will fill your stomachs.”

With all of the ingredients, Weed started to cook.

Anchovies boiled moderately, thick gravy seasoning mix to create a broth, and he put in plenty of meat into the stew.

Whenever the soup was distributed he could feel his heart breaking.

Trickling.

Out of Weed's two eyes tears were coming out.

“It's Saint Weed's tears!”

“Weed would even shed tears for us.”

“He’s the real deal, doing this for the peace of the continent.”

The surprised villagers of Morata exclaimed.

The tears that trickled down were tears for the precious loss of money, but the villagers had misunderstood.

'My precious money.'

Weed impatiently pulled out a small piece of paper, and quickly wrote on it.

For the villagers of Morata that were starving I have cooked them food using luxurious ingredients. Consumption amounts:

Seasoning: 7 Gold 47 Silver 98 Copper

Currently the average price of meat in the Versailles Continent:
38 Gold 80 Silver 7 Copper

Various vegetables: 9 Gold 10 Silver

The effort to cook the food 20

He wrote down the value of food ingredients he used to feed the

residents of Morata.

Weed beat the ground with grief.

‘In order to recover the amount I have spent I would have to work harder.’

By looking at the expenditure statement he resolved to work harder and make more money. 'From now on I'm going to hunt even if I'm tired. When I'm doing a quest and if I ever want to pull out, I can look at this statement and get strength from it.'

The purpose was not only this.

I could not sit still while doing such a good job. While I'm walking I can secretly drop this paper and it will attract the attention of people.

Especially if it was dropped during a party.

“Huh, why did this fall out?”

And you hurriedly pick it up as if it was nothing. Of course, nearby co-workers would be forced to wonder what it is. Weed was never going to show it straight away though, cause if you hide the information the greater the value of the information would be.

And when curiosity peaks that's when you hopelessly show the

information. Even then, you hesitate to show it around three times then you slowly take out and show the expenditure statement.

By doing this you would be boasting to you co-workers.

The villagers that received the soup, that contained the oiled fish, were overly rejoiced.

“You really are the savior of this village.”

“Thank you. How do we repay you gracefulness?”

One by one the villagers thanked Weed, while he smiled back at them as if it was nothing.

“It’s nothing. The road I’ve been walking on has always been like this. Now I think that this is to be my destiny. I will do whatever I can to help people in trouble. That is a life that I can live without regret.”

“Now that is a response from Weed.”

Since he liked to hear praises, he gave more food to anyone who praised him .

If colleagues who knew him saw the appearance of the current Weed, they would not believe it was him.

In the past, it was a time a pyramid was created.

After he completed the pyramid, in the castle of Serabourg, there were a lot of people in tears of joy. The majority were novices with no money and low levels. Malnourished, at the end of the exploitation of the labor they were glad to receive the money from the quest.

Finally they would be able to at least buy a piece of bread!

Till now, that's how Weed lived, now he had a boundless natural look. It was a skillful law to not have done charity even once.

Alveron, Freya's platform of paladins and priests did not value gold.

"Freya will bless Weed."

It was like the attitudes of the Paladins and Priests, could not get any better. Watching the non-righteous and inconsiderate Weed would of given him immense respect.

The priests urged.

"The Freya religious order needs a lot of people. We know of Weed's loyalty and all the great acts you have done for our religious order. Even though you might have not walked in the path of faith you are more than qualified. Now why don't you become our Bishop and work for our religious order?"

Ding!

A religious position has been proposed. Freya's religious order of Bishops.

Given jurisdiction over a temple, you can oversee the finances and also expand the policies. It is a similar position where you oversee a castle's finances, but there is a difference where you have the jurisdiction over the works of the religious order.

You can foster new Paladins and Priests, and also use the donations to buy land and erect new temples.

The higher up you go up in the hierarchy, the more responsibilities you get.

However, if you lay siege to a castle or town then your reputation will plummet.

If you use your power for bad then you will be judged.

Which province you will be responsible for will also be determined by your reputation and contributions.

Do you want to accept the seat of Bishop?

The Bishops of Freya was a special place that even the world didn't know that existed.

Take on the important position of the order and have authority over the Paladins and Priests!

No one has ever been proposed a position like this until Weed had appeared.

Coming back for the church, the contributions that have been steadily built up through the Legions of Undead War, and the high reputation and the place of bishop.

The opportunity to walk the path of a religion that has succeeded.

However, Weed shook his head.

"I am honored to be given the opportunity to serve the church of Freya. However, even though it may not be me, I have found that there are many others that would be willing to serve the church. I am willing to use my life to help people who are in a worse position than here."

The position of Bishop for the Order of Freya has been refused.

The priests withdrew themselves.

“The goddess Freya will acknowledge your wonderful mind.”

Even though it was a once in a lifetime chance, the reason he refused was simple.

If he became the bishop, like now, there would be extremely large cases where Weed would have to live for others. Even though reputation and influence might increase, Weed thought money was more important and thought that it was not worth losing the money.

“Then enjoy.”

As Weed poured out the soup and rice he smiled a bit.

With sad eyes he shed a tear but forcefully spread a smile on his face!

Pain and frustration, and resignation. Resentment and anger in a rotten smile was a step forward.

Nevertheless, to people it looked like he was a person who liked a lot of people.

Then a resident who was wearing red, came holding a bowl and said.

“Have you ever made clothing of the Niflheim Empire?”

“Pardon?”

“Empire clothing are clothes that you wear when you enter an empire. It’s suitable for working, and for fighting in. It is complicated to create, and you also need special material. I know the method to create the clothing.”

The villager handed to Weed a book.

“I only give this to benefactors.”

You have acquired the foundations for making clothing of the Niflheim Empire.

A sewing item!

The rise in closeness made him able to receive the secret to create regional clothes.

The Morata province was a master of leather and cloth in the past, and he had high skills in sewing.

“Something like this.....”

Weed quickly took the book in his arms.

“Then we’ll give you this.”

Other residents of the village gave 2nd grading deer leather or cloth. In exchange for receiving the good food they provided items for sewing.

“If you want to go to the Valley of Death, then you will need to follow the Pahel River. All year round the river is frozen thick with ice, and monsters don’t come out there.”

“In the past, if you went north for about three days, you would reach the Sabi Village. They have unusual methods that are passed down from father to son, and they love to carve things. Even though you will have to pass through dangerous roads, if you’re a craftsman it would be best to go there.”

“The closest fort to the Valley of Death is the Vent Castle. Once it was a thriving with knight during the Niflheim Empire, but now we don’t know what has happened to it.”

The villagers were able to give additional information. Weed had started to think.

‘This is definitely not a coincidence. Of course, to someone as kind, and compassionate like me such blessings would come. ‘

Weed started to cook.

But it was not easy to create a hundred bowls. Even though there were enough ingredients, the number of hands that were needed to make the food was not enough!

It was vital to make food quickly. If the food line was to be cut off, the people who haven't been able to eat would fight over the food. Even though moderate hunger is the best side dish, if it goes too far then it could cause a revolt.

But he could not ask Seoyoon or Alveron to help.

If someone with no cooking skills helped, then the taste would only worsen.

If it was just an everyday situation, then he would ask Alveron to at least do the dishes, but with the paladins and priests watching him he could not use Alveron as his servant.

However Weed had enough experience.

When he was in large hunting groups, he made food for a lot of people. This experience!

In Morata, he had to make food in bulk for the paladins and priests. Therefore he was familiar with how to make large quantities food.

'I can't make stew. I need to create a menu that I can make quickly!'

In a large pot put in all the ingredients and whisk them all together. Bring the water to boil then slowly adjust the amount of water. Then create a lot of rice, and distribute the rice bowls.

Weed looked after Seoyoon and Alveron, so that they would receive enough food. It is natural to look after your partners when you're about to venture into a dangerous place.

But the villagers who were being well fed shed tears.

“When was the last time we were able to eat like this.....”

“Since the invasion of the monsters, I think this is the first time.”

“Can we return to how we once were?”

They each were locked out in grief.

The village elder started to speak.

“It is possible. If we gather up our strengths and work together, then we will be able to live like we have in the past.”

“I hope that a day like that would come.”

“It will definitely come. Rather our village, from when it was

freed from the monsters has never once shared our joys. Such a joyful day we could not stay still. Let's put on a festival. A festival that will celebrate the rebuilding of our village."

"Wow!"

Ding!

The Morata village Night festival has taken place. Morata Village's Unique Night Festival.

Throughout the night there was singing, dancing, they shared their joys and hope.

The productivity of the Moarata villagers increases by 300% for 1 month.

The town's culture and technology advances rapidly over a period of time.

Goods will be sold in shops without a margin.

There is a significant increase in the number of young children after a certain period of time after the night festival.

Residents change to a more hard-working, industrious people.

You can participate and enjoy the festival.

Night Festival!

Festivals happened on a regular basis in big cities, but for a festival to take place in a small village was rare.

The satisfied villagers gathered together at the fire and started a festival. The women started to sing, while the men beat on their drums.

Dong! Dong! Dong!

The villages danced to the beat of the drums. Every time the wind blew it made the dance seem more dreamy.

The women took their clothes off and danced wearing only their undergarments.

Even though it was cold, the heat of the festival made you forget about the cold.

Thanks to that, Weed could have a nice show.

“Festival’s aren’t bad.”

Men and women danced, while the music poured out. In a

pleasant atmosphere the night had passed.

“Hoo, it’s finally finished.”

Weed quickly finished the dishes and sat down.

Weed was tired from busily preparing food for thousands of people. Weed himself, couldn’t eat a lot therefore he was hungry as well. However, after seeing Seoyoon’s face his hunger dissipated. In the daylight when looking closely at Seoyoon’s face, there was no place for her. Always looking cold was a bit of a waste, but her mysteriousness and charm were enough to stir the heart.

But now, the light of the moon and the fire gave a proper atmosphere. At this point, Seoyoon’s beauty even surprised Weed.

He made a lot of sculptures of her and he faith that he could make her with his eyes closed, but as he saw Seoyoon now, it surprised him to the point that his faith was nearly broken.

“Beautiful.”

He could do nothing but compliment her on her beauty.

Seoyoon was sitting with her legs wrapped. However, unlike usual, she was watching the festival with soft eyes.

‘If I miss this chance I might not get another.’

While Weed was fully immersed in Seoyoon, he took out Zahab's Engraving Knife and the ore he had received from the Rhodium Sculpting Guild.

“Identify.”

With a tiny whisper, Weed confirmed the information on the goods.

The Ore:Durability 1,000/1,000

White crystal set.

Is made out of special materials that absorb radiating light. Very hard substance, therefore it won't crack or break.

It is known as a tool to engrave and polish, unless you have excellent workmanship it is impossible to deal with. If you still want to carve it, then a good knife is needed.

Restrictions:

Sculptor.

Quest item.

Option:

Variety of hues.

You can make the sculpture of this century.

There are other special option.

It was a quest item in order to obtain the Moonlight Sculpting!

Durability was a whopping 1,000. If you tried to trim it with a normal knife, then the teeth of the blade would wear out.

'It should be ok, because I have Zahab's Engraving Knife.'

If you're a sculptor everything can be converted into a unique item.

'No matter how hard it is, even if it is a hard ore, there should be no reason that I can't cut it.'

Weed finally had a target to create from this ore.

Seoyoon!

He would create an image of her from these pieces of ore.

'I don't have to be greedy here. I should live by this feeling.'

Weed knew if he was discovered it would be a disaster. Until now, if it was discovered that all the statues he made were of her then she would want revenge on him.

Even though he was afraid of the aftermath, because it was a small sculpture, he could hide it with his hands, and then it would be difficult to recognize it.

‘Before making the specific face shape, I don’t know where to cut.’

Even if he’s been noticed, with the atmosphere Seoyoon was showing, it was worth it. Before the current feelings disappeared he needed to hurry.

Weed pressed the carving knife against the moon rock. Because it was a hard ore, using ordinary strength was not enough.

‘I can’t think of doing it all at once. I need to do it little by little. The night is long.’

A task that requires great strength and a fine-grained sense!

Proficiency is also essential.

Little by little Weed started to carve it from the head of the moon rock.

First is not to be greedy and make the shape of a person.

The armor that Seoyoon was wearing now, it didn’t fit the

atmosphere.

Weed envisioned Seoyoon wearing a white dress.

She is not here where the ground is covered by snow. She is in a flower garden with bees and butterflies flying around.

Surrounded by many people, the little girl who is bursting with laughter!

Even though it was an atmosphere that didn't suit Seoyoon, the aspiration that Weed felt from her now was this.

Weed slowly started to move the carving knife faster.

Full Immersion!

Weed did not calculate what he should cut in his head.

His hand moved with instinct and from the ore he carved the feelings he wanted to show Seoyoon.

Par ah aht!

Every time he cut the moon rock, flashes came out. Like uncovering old layers of dirt, the rock shone brightly.

Whenever Weed pressed the carving knife against the rock, a little more light began to shine.

Under the shining moon, the villagers danced. Trying not to attract any attention from the festival, he created the sculpture.

A brilliant light came from the rock.

It was almost a magical sight.

It seemed like Weed was carving from a sphere of light.

“Wow, what’s that?”

“He’s creating a sculpture.”

As word got by, villagers and paladins gathered around Weed. But they kept their distance and did not come any closer. When creating a sculpture it is best to not be obtrusive.

Fortunately, Seoyoon was near the bonfire and was more interested in watching the festival than watching Weed carve a sculpture.

The abyss of beauty.

Moonlight Sculptor!

However, Weed didn't have any other work.

'Well, it wasn't a rock that could be carved easily.'

Since the sculpture gave a light that stung your eyes, in the situation that he had to carve the rock, it was difficult.

To a certain extent he got more familiar with the engraving.

Since he made a considerable number of sculptures every day, if you add all the sculpture he made, it would be a huge amount.

But even then, since he could not confirm the details, it was difficult to carve.

Even though it might have a good form, in the inside it was just dead.

Because you moved the carving knife wrongly, you have hurt your fingers.

Vitality decreased by 30. Dexterity temporarily decreased by 3.

Because you moved the carving knife wrongly, you have hurt your arm.

Vitality decreased by 100. Damage done by hands or arms temporarily decreased by 8%.

There were instances when he made mistakes he had not usually made, which made him hurt his hands. If he was being decent then he wouldn't have hurt his hands like this. But since the rock was so hard and he had to apply a lot of strength, even if he didn't get hurt now, he would have been bound to get hurt soon.

It was then that Weed finally realized the difficulty of this quest.

‘Trying to make sculptures out of pieces of moon rock is not as easy as it seems. A little mistake might be ok, but a big mistake is not.’

After information was gathered from Rhodium and given to the Sculptor Guild, he thought the quest would be finished. But to completely make the sculpture, that would be the peak of the quest.

Since the moon rock had tremendous durability it would have a hard latency. But when you try to carve it with a carving knife, mistakes can be easily made. Because you can't see it well, and you have to give it excessive strength when carving, it could be spoilt without seeing it.

If important parts like the body or neck is damaged, then the sculpture can be nothing but a waste.

If the only rock is lost, then I might not be able to learn Moonlight Sculpting.

‘Of course, there is not a thingy that is easy to do in this guy’s job!’

For other professions you can obtain skills by obtaining the necessary items or learn skills by testing them out.

But other professions aren’t as stunning as the sculptor.

The urgency that he might not be able to get another challenge.

Even though it was challenging to master sculpting, to familiarize yourself with Moonlight Sculpting was formidable.

Weed’s heart was shaken.

‘If I hurry like this I might end up damaging this sculpture.’

I can’t just let this opportunity fly. If I leave time to study the form step by step, then the chances of making a mistake will be reduced.

However Weed shook his head.

‘No, there is no way to make a sculpture mechanically. There will

come a moment when I have the confidence to make the sculpture.'

When I try to attempt the challenge again later, then there will be too many ideas in my head. Because of the obsession to not make a mistake becomes bigger, composure disappears.

Even though it might be lacking something, since I laid a finger on it, it would be better to finish it now was what I had judged.

'If I do it carefully..... I can do it!'

Because you moved the carving knife wrongly, you have a big cut on your fingers.

Vitality decreased by 250. Whenever you deal damage with your hands or arms, the cut will become bigger.

As soon as he was motivated again, he messed up.

Even though the knife was carving the sculpture, the strength he had left over fizzled.

However, Weed changed directions and didn't damage the sculpture.

After that, as he was carving the sculpture he made a string of mistakes.

Little by little his vitality disappeared.

By heading down this path he could die before finishing.

Weed tried to relax

‘The worst case is that I’ll die. My level will be lowered, and skill proficiency levels will be lowered as well. The skills that I worked up to build with difficulty will all be lowered.’

His view was becoming more and more pessimistic.

Dry saliva was gathering in his mouth.

Weed held the sculpture in his hand, felt it and carved.

But he was glad of the fact that he was making a sculpture of Seoyoon. Even though the size was different, it was less difficult since he had created a lot of other sculptures of her.

Weed literally hugged the rock and carved it with his knife.

And finally he was able to create the form he wanted.

Ding!

You have created a sculpture from the moon rock.

Fame increased by 450.

Sculpture Understanding skill has increased by 1 level.

Sculpture skill proficiency has increased.

Handicraft skill proficiency has increased.

Arts stat increased by 60.

Bursting with thankfulness.

Completion of the sculpture!

The moon rock changed into a sculpture of Seoyoon laughing.

As time went by, the rock was still shining brightly.

The sculpture started to glow clearly.

As the sculpture was just carved, you could see the smooth form. However, since the rock was emitting a bright light, it seemed more noble.

Ding!

Search of the lost light completed. Dealing with the mysteries of the light sculpture, you should know how to tune the light through sensations. Been handed down only to a handful of sculptors, the technology is very dangerous, and at the same time it is outstanding.

Quest Reward: Gain of Skill.

Moonlight Sculpting has been learnt.Moonlight Sculpting Level 1 (0%) : Sculptor's skill

Sculptures will be able to emit light. However, the shape and color of the light will depend on the material. As time passes, the value of the finished sculpture will increase depending on the signs of the years passed.

You can handle light in everyday life. Light can be sprinkled as an attack, or it can be put on the body as a defense. It uses certain levels of mana to prevent magic attacks rather than physical attacks. An affiliation to nature, it's weaker than a wizard's shield but it uses a lot less mana. Can be used to light special places. Can light dark places.

Your affiliation with light has increased by 3%.

You can create light sculptures.

Luminarie. Fantastic light of the three-dimensional sculpture using a large number of jewelry.

Skill Sculpting Blade has been transformed.Sculpting Blade has developed into Moonlight Sculpting Blade.

Mana consumption will be tripled.

Using light as an offense will be possible.

Where there is moonlight, the attack power will be doubled.

Current expertise in Sculpting Blade will be transferred to Moonlight Sculpting Blade and will be reduced by half.

Moonlight Sculpting Blade skill is Intermediate Level 2 (43%).

Acquisition of the Moonlight Sculpting!

Now he could be reborn as a true Moonlight Sculptor.

With the completion of the quest, one can understand more facts.

‘I now know why it’s called Moonlight Sculptor.’

The finished sculptures will shed some light.

The sculpture Weed made was also emitting light.

There is no mistake that the light must be placed into the sculpture.

If the light is like that of the sun, then you would not be able to see it.

If you put proper light into the sculpture it would raise its dignity.

If it is too bright then the sculpture's mystique will fall.

Sculpture completed in the northern part of the moonlight!

Weed retained the sculpture of the smiling Seoyoon into his bosom.

*

Dr. Cha Eun-Hee was looking hard at the monitor in the Great Society Rehabilitation Center.

She was watching the images coming out from the capsule Seoyoon was in.

The festival in the small northern village.

People were bursting with laughter, singing and dancing.

The romantic atmosphere.

Insurance would not be these things.

Cha Eun-Hee was at an inconvenience.

‘It was an opportunity to go on a trip with Orc Karichwi.’

The adventurer with a great reputation, Weed.

If you could go on an adventure with Weed, you would not hesitate to accept.

Orcs aged in battles!

Being a female Orc, fighting battles was a pleasure that went to heart.

The pleasure of being able to freely run around the many places in the mountains was unspeakable.

However, to Cha Eun-Hee, the adventure in the north was more interesting.

The events that occurred as soon as they arrived in the northern village.

Cha Eun-Hee envied the pair.

Chapter 2: Operation Acquire Food

After the night of celebration, Weed left Morata along with Seoyoon and Alveron.

“From now on genuine travel?”

He gathered as much information in advance as possible about the region he was heading to.

He meticulously learned the general direction and the paths he had to cross.

But food supply was the one thing he needed the most at the moment.

“Let’s see, how long will the food last?”

Shuffling through his bag, the food supply that was always filled to more than a certain size was now frozen into one piece. Nowhere in that piece remained essential food.

At the Morata Festival, he could only spend it all on villagers eating and drinking in large quantities.

Fortunately, the alcohol bottles were still there.

Before leaving the Yurokina Mountains, he plucked and immersed the wild grapes in them!

Sitting there, it silently ripened.

But Weed shook his head.

'Alcohol will not fill the fullness factor.'

Alcohol cannot fill one's stomach. Of course, you will get some degree of fullness, but there was a problem. As the amount of alcohol rises beyond a certain point, strength and agility declined. In more severe cases, disabled in battle! In the worst case scenario, you may die due to excessive drinking.

'Still, later on drinking just a glass will be fine.'

In life, alcohol is absolutely a useless thing! However, alcohol also had its advantages. In Royal Road, after getting attacked, it doesn't end with only just a temporary drop in life.

You should give immediate treatment by rubbing herbs or potions and wrapping bandages. Also, when there is swelling in the wounded area, it has the effect of disinfection that will help prevent additional damage.

Furthermore, alcohol is good medicine against the cold. When it's cold, drinking about a cup of alcohol will allow you to withstand the cold much better.

‘I can’t use this precious alcohol. Conceivably, when it matures quite a bit, I’ll be able to receive money.....’

Leaving the wines in his bag as they were, Weed went to obtain food.

*

Sarak.

Terose felt refreshed stepping on pure white snow.

‘Finally the beginning of our resurrection.’

The imposing Barbarian Warrior Pline’s forehead frowned slightly.

“It’s very cold here.”

Dane covering his face with a robe spoke.

“It’s fine. Fighting will warm you up quickly.”

Terose looked at his colleagues that believed in him and followed him all the way here and nodded.

“We must fight for sure.”

Scorpion King's Tomb Quest!

Due to that incident, the Crimson Wing Guild disbanded, but the people that formed the core did not leave.

Magma Witch Psyche and Light Bearer Mako. Assault Captain Bastien. The elite of Crimson Wing Guild hid their names, switched armors, and took part in the Cold Rose Guild's expedition.

From the beginning, the last thing in the world they wanted was to mix in with another guild's expedition. Crimson Wing tried to directly set up their own expedition group. But bad things happened all at once and the situation continued to worsen. Guilds seceded from the alliance. As a result, the towns they held were attacked from the front and because of the Scorpion King's Tomb, they were pressured with funding.

This chain of bad events was enough to crash Crimson Wing from the top 10 guilds in Versailles Continent. As a result, the guild inevitably had to disband. The heads remained till the end defending it to the death, but the slowly crumbling guild was seen to not even number in the tens of thousands.

‘But we will rise once again.’

Terose wanted to regain his honor and revive Crimson Wing.

‘The place will be the North.’

To reverse everything and revive the guild, the expedition!

‘To return the continent to normal is our responsibility that cannot be passed to anyone.’

Terose smiled coldly.

*

The expedition led by Cold Rose Guild was still in trouble. They confidently brought a large number of people, but all kinds of problems appeared one after another.

The expedition brought a massive number cooks! Nothing went well in the early days of the expedition. To raise the morale of the expedition crew, they made lots of food to give them. Eating delicious food would bring up their spirits.

To Oberon and Drum, it looked like they bought enough supplies to not be overburdened. But the amount of food ingredients used by the expedition was beyond imagination. Those who had nothing much to do in this cold place relieved stress by eating food the cooks made.

“Delicious.”

“Wherever you go you have to eat good food.”

“Yeah. It was a good idea to follow the expedition. There’s a reason the Cold Rose Guild is famous.”

The expedition gave their thanks as they reasoned about the name of the guild.

Cooks also became enthusiastic.

“People are eating the delicious food we made.”

“Opportunity is knocking, we must imprint on to them that the Cook Job is important.”

“Of course! The ingredients aren’t even ours so let’s use them to our hearts’ content!”

The cooks, due to the abundant food ingredients, had peace of mind and instead of what they usually created they dared to develop novel fine cuisine.

“Matsutake mushroom and crab dish!”

“Snail in honey!”

Making good food improved their cooking mastery even more. Therefore, the cooks spared no expense in ingredients to make food. Since the expedition also gave a positive reaction, they didn't hesitate.

Ingredients were rapidly consumed. At that time, at least those managing the supplies should've stopped them. But those responsible for managing supplies were completely relaxed.

“Well, we can get food materials anytime we want.”

“Captain Oberon did order us to raise morale so give them supplies in large quantities as they want.”

They did nothing even though the food ingredients were decreasing very rapidly. When they realized the remaining ingredients had been reduced to almost 30%, the mood finally changed a bit.

“From now on, save a little food before the main course.”

“Need to get food ingredients.”

“Right now it will be better to generously fill the inventory stock.”

Then the big problem occurred. It was very difficult to obtain food ingredients in the cold North. In the mountains of the center of the continent, chestnuts, acorns and fruits like apples were

readily available, and they could even hunt.

Even if there was a food shortage that made their stamina decline or stiffen their movement, cases where they died from starvation were quite rare. With money, it was possible to buy food ingredients from passing travelers. But in the North, because of the cold they couldn't get fruit. It was also impossible to obtain food from travelers.

Inevitably, the only option left was to hunt, but this was a formidable task. The monster infested areas were limited. It was unreasonable to provide food for the many number of personnel in the expedition through hunting. It could only be attributed to them overlooking the importance of food.

As the food ingredients rapidly decreased, the morale of expedition fell as well. Food quality declined and the situation of saving food to eat later came up. Not only did the quality of food drop, they had to save as much food possible.

“I’m hungry.”

“Please bring me something to eat.”

The expedition wallowing in hunger! If they started off poorly in the beginning instead of stopping in the middle of eating well, in theory it would be much more difficult to go hungry. The Cold Rose Guild took the initiative and starved themselves.

However, even in the midst there were those that did not starve. They were not part of the elite Cold Rose Guild. There was no way the righteous and highly respected Oberon would give them permission to eat their secretly packed food.

The Geomchis! Geomchi 306 pulled out barley bread that had been hidden away in his backpack and secretly chewed. Old, cold, hard and frozen bread, but as saliva moistened it, he ate as it gently dissolved.

“No matter what, barley bread tastes best.”

Ever since starving to death, they decided to always have a plentiful amount to get ride of hunger. So barley bread always generously went in their backpacks. Basically, in Royal Road there was an inseparable relationship between the Geomchis and barley bread.

However, a majority of the expedition was forced to endure as they clutched their empty bellies. They realized this fact at the end of such a failure.

‘Difficult to find food in the North. Must conserve food ingredients as much as possible.’

*

Weed embarked on gathering food.

'Have to gather as many edible things as possible.'

Since enough seasoning remained, he just had to gather food ingredients.

'No choice but to hunt.'

Weed thoroughly set the principle of local procurement in the past. Apart from not having to pay money, it was easy to obtain fresh ingredients. Piling up food ingredients for a long time in one place will just end up rotten and uneatable, that's law.

“Alveron, let's go!”

“Yes.”

Using Alveron like a subordinate, Weed moved to the mountain behind Morata Village.

Woof woof woof!

Aooooooooo!

Usually wandering like lost souls in the mountain behind Morata Village, Wolves! Their wild instincts sparkled as they acted in packs eating animals nearby, however, the Wolves trembled at the advent of Weed.

‘This wicked bastard.....’

‘He’s looking at us as food.’

‘He ate our parents. My mother met her end at his hands, he didn’t even leave the leather. Woof woof.’

‘My brother got cooked whole. He has returned.’

Weed’s high fighting spirit!

It had the effect of decreasing morale of monsters similar to or lower than his level. In addition, Weed hunted Wolves several times already. For monsters, Wolves have fairly high intellect and excellent memory. Hunting and extracting the meat and bone, then stripping off the leather for sewing, the Wolves did not forget the cruelty of Weed and trembled in fear.

‘Still, we are wolves.’

‘To protect our pride.’

Woof woof woof!

The Wolves rushed as a pack while Weed lightly drew his sword.

“Moonlight Sculpting Blade!”

The enhanced and definitive version of the Sculpting Blade! A sword of serene light. With a far longer range, Weed brandished the sword of light and slaughtered the Wolves. Weed's level could not be compared to before, Wolves originally weren't even considered as opponents.

Slaughter!

He separated bones, meat and leather of the Wolves he caught on the spot.

Seoyoon simply watched.

Weed gently told her.

“Don't just stand there and watch, help me.”

Seoyoon didn't say anything. But through her eyes the feeling of sorry was passed. She felt sorry for Weed suffering alone in this cold weather, but if the Wolves did not attack her first, she would not attack them. Weed shook his head.

‘This person can't be called an ally.’

Somehow he needed to improve his position over Seoyoon through power, because if she just folds her arms every time there's a fight, it won't be helpful. The predicament was enough to

put pressure on him.

Like the saying being powerless is a sin, Seoyoon's fighting ability was far superior to Weed's.

Weed was still struggling in the early level 300s. In order to proceed with the previous quest, he inevitably had to give life to sculptures so his levels hadn't risen.

'Wouldn't have made it through the quest if I didn't grant life to sculptures.'

Though he hunted hard in the recent months, because of this reason his level didn't rise. Still, while his level went up and down, various skill masteries went up. Getting hit by monsters whenever he had time also raised his toughness a lot.

Weed's method of faithfully raising stat and skill mastery built up substantial foundation, so it wasn't some unspeakable plight like no income at all. Stats and skills certainly help when hunting monsters. But Weed surmised Seoyoon's level was at least in the late 300s.

'Maybe even over 400.'

Hermes Guild's BardRay unveiled his level at his coronation. Surprisingly, his level was revealed to be no less than 412. In Royal Road and on the Internet, there was a lot of excitement. Even when considering the amount of time passed after his level was

known to be in late 300s, his level up speed was still fairly rapid.

‘Probably because the guild is herding monsters for him. As the head of the Hermes Guild, of course he’s receiving benefits.’

Actively utilizing supplies and equipment, as well as collecting information on hunting grounds. Blacksmiths crafted for him and Bards were always on standby. In addition, in most of the battles BardRay would deliver the finishing blow to the monsters. Receiving such strong support, it was no surprise his fast leveling speed remained unchanged.

Originally, BardRay was a famous gamer in other games. There were a lot of forces that would follow him. In Continent of Magic, those who followed BardRay were very common.

Weed did not clash with BardRay because he was the first to quit the game. BardRay in Continent of Magic was one of the top 5 Warriors and his guild was the strongest force there. According to an unconfirmed rumor, his actual fortune was so enormous you could hear the sound of wealth.

The scene of BardRay revealing his level at his coronation brought about a large topic in the Hall of Fame. Not only that, all game broadcasters treated it as a major news issue. Furthermore, the revenue of bars and pubs in Versailles Continent increased by more than 5 times.

“Bastard looks good at whatever he does.”

“We slowly walk and he just flies off the shelves quickly.”

“I’m still level 357. When will I be over 400?”

Bitter soreness!

Crowds tried to resolve their so called bitterness with alcohol. Immediately known up to the present, BardRay received all their attention. King of the Continent. Officially named Emperor, he challenged for supremacy with his apparent ability. Of course, Hermes Guild’s scale and breadth of their forces had just as many enemies.

In the wide Versailles Continent, though not as strong as BardRay, users with the level to restrain him numbered at least a dozen people. There was also quite a lot of tension between Hermes and other guilds. Single guilds capable of standing against Hermes were only 7, but when considering guild alliances, more than 15 were able to deal with Hermes’ hegemony.

Although not as desired, all users in Versailles Continent focused their attention on BardRay. They all envied the strongest on the continent. Such was the person BardRay.

*

‘The Dark Gamers Union revealed combat videos. Compared to the Mercenaries in the late level 380s, Seoyoon was by far stronger. The monsters the Mercenaries took quite a while to hunt, Seoyoon

would murder in an instant.’

Depending on the method of battle and the primary used skills according to the hunt, a speed difference was bound to occur. But even when considering those points, Seoyoon was far stronger than Weed himself.

‘Between a minimum of 390 to beyond 400. It probably won’t stray too far from that range.’

An estimation made by Weed. Comparing combat abilities based on monsters would probably not be wrong. Combat abilities rarely went counter to his eyes’ intuition. As such, he couldn’t force Seoyoon to do this and that. He needed to make her into a companion who would help him voluntarily.

‘It’ll be pathetic if I get beaten by a girl!’

Weed spoke in an insinuating tone passing through. Like a merchant selling self-preservation food!

“You never ate Northern Wolves before right?”

“.....?”

“Actually, they’re so thin they don’t have much meat. Their bones are uselessly strong too. But the taste is incomparable. This is an absolutely true story!”

“.....”

“Firmness and longevity together in the meat. The pleasure of eating after carefully separating them from the bone!”

Weed reproduced the appearance of tearing ribs with both hands. Truthfully, Wolf Galbi covered in spices was the best. Weed licked his lips imitating the feeling of not being able to forget the taste ever again. Weed added these final words.

“And the delicacy that comes from immersing the bones later on. Drinking one sip of the piping hot broth in the cold is just.....”

Seeuk.

Listening up to that point, Seoyoon headed toward wolves with her sword unsheathed. Meaning to hunt. Without a single flaw, clear eyes and white jade like skin, her beauty was only really expressed in the morning dew.

After Seoyoon went out and hunted Wolves, Weed extracted the leather, meat and bones from the bodies of the Wolves. With the proper division of labor, they could gather food ingredients quickly.

“We can eat for a long time with this much.”

Weed smiled with satisfaction as he looked at his bag full of Wolf meat. In the past, he had the experience of feeding dozens of Paladins. The Paladins liberated from the statues. To handle even 1 more growing mouth, he had to increase hunting. Through it, he learned of locations where you can gather lots of meat. That memory was helpful even now.

Weed didn't gather Wolf meat only.

“Cannot eat only one thing for too long.”

You would be concerned about loss of appetite as well as the dish effects. If you eat only food made from the same ingredients, its efficiency will reduce until it dies.

Cooking Wolf meat dishes was simple. You either boil or grill it. Eating Wolf meat dishes increases health by 300 and increases strength and vitality by 20. It also has the advantage of making health regeneration 2% faster than usual and improved fighting spirit.

But when eating only similar foods, the cooking effects are reduced until it only gives the feeling of fullness. At such times, other delicacies are needed to provoke the taste buds.

“This way.”

Weed took Seoyoon and Alveron and went beyond the mountain behind them. There was very broad ice path. The land did not

consist of soil and stone but of pure ice! Originally, this area was a huge flowing river. However, due to the far too low temperature, thick ice covered it.

“Well then, let’s go get something to eat.”

Weed along with Seoyoon and Alveron walked to the center of the ice.

“.....?”

Seoyoon and Alveron were both curious. Basically, food ingredients are bought at stores. It was usually enough to buy from there. Few people had become proficient enough in the Cooking skill to obtain ingredients from the wild like Weed. In addition, the thick, frozen ice was devoid of any kind of herbs or fruits. To make matters worse, there was not even 1 monster nearby. So preparing food in a place like this sounded like nothing but nonsense.

Shuaaaaa!

Tremendous winds were blowing.

Kuleuleuleu.

The ground rang minutely.

‘What’s this?’

Something unknown. It wasn't like earthquakes did not happen in Versailles Continent. But the situation around seemed far too peaceful. The mountain they just came down from did not shake even the slightest bit, gradually their bodies moved toward the minute sound.

‘No way.’

After looking downward, Seoyoon's face became pale. Below the thick ice, rapids were flowing! A huge river was flowing beneath the ice at a furious pace. Through the currents charging at the ground of ice, the minute sound emerged. Seoyoon and Alveron were instinctively engulfed by fear.

If it was just monsters, they would not be afraid of dying. But if the ice breaks and they fall into the river below, they would helplessly freeze to death.

‘Down below is going to be incredibly colder.’

At their current location was a sharp cold, the temperature of the river down below need not be said. Seoyoon and Alveron were completely tense.

Gedeukdeukdeuk!

Weed pulled out a sculpting nail and chisel, scratching the ice to draw a circle. Then he pulled out a Blacksmith hammer and began

ruthlessly slamming the ground.

Every time Weed slammed down the hammer, the ice rang. Blood drained from Seoyoon and Alveron's faces.

‘If you want to commit suicide, do it alone.’

‘Goddess Freya bless him. Grant me salvation.’

Then they heard Weed's muttering voice.

“Very solidly frozen and not even cracked. Then with greater force.....”

At the end of this, a tremendous fear surged upon Seoyoon and Alveron. Soon, Weed swung the hammer with all his might. He accurately concentrated the force toward the center of the circle he made.

Kuaaang!

Kuaaaaaang!

Every time Weed slammed down the hammer, Seoyoon and Alveron felt faint. Goosebumps encroached all over their bodies. After looking at each other and nodding, they located a safe place and backed up. Meanwhile Weed swung the hammer several more times and the ice finally broke off, making a round circle. Around

the line made at the beginning with the sculpting knife! A big hole formed there. A hole where the cold river flowed through!

Weed squatted down on the spot and sat, pulling items from his bag one by one. A long fishing rod, pots and a net capable of holding fish.

“Shall I go catch some now?”

Weed cast the fishing rod into the ice hole. Smelt fishing in the dead of winter. Weed became proficient in the Fishing skill to the point he could procure food to survive in this place. Through the cracked ice, the riverbed seemed transparent. Inside the river, fish were swimming energetically.

“Big catch!”

Weed busily moved the fishing rod.

You have caught a 20cm long Sweet Fish.

You have caught a 22cm long Pond Smelt.

You have caught a 57cm long Fresh Water Eel.

You have caught a 1m 20cm long Gold Fish. A catch that'll remain in the history of fishing!

Fishing skill mastery has risen.

Luck rises by 1.

Unrivaled fishing spot! Catching completely defenseless fish. Guys spirited enough to rise out of the tempestuous rapids! Above the ice ground nearby Weed, it was filled with fish splashing vigorously.

“Identify.”

Sweet FishA fish with thin and flat body. Only lives in clear water. Dark blue color.

Can be caught in various ways. Thrives in a fairly wide region.

Sweet fish is common, but people can never forget the taste.

Food 3rd Grade Fish Ingredient.

Pond SmeltBody is thin and flat on the side. Light fishy smell. Can be made into good sashimi.

Fish tastes best in winter. Can be cooked in a variety of ways.

Food 2nd Grade Fish Ingredient.

Fresh Water EelEels are great for male stamina! Common fish, but many people seek it due to its effect and taste.

Usually caught during winter, but sometimes there are odd ones.

Taking care of the many bones is tricky, but incredibly delicious after seasoning and eating.

Food 2nd Grade Fish Ingredient.

Gold FishA rare fish that shines with golden skin. Luck follows those who catch.

Inhabits living and breathing nature. Likes cold places.

Enhances flavor of any dish, improves stamina by 1 and helps with detoxification.

Taste in any cooking, and increases vitality by 1 and helps with detoxification.

It is a rare fish that all anglers want to catch at least once in their lifetime.

Food 1st Rate Fish Ingredient.

Watching the lively and fluttering fishes, Weed's mouth was

filled with a heartwarming smile. They couldn't be compared to rare Blacksmith or Sewing items, but still, in their own way, the fish he caught were valuable. In the case of the Gold Fish which permanently raised stamina by 1, its value was indescribable.

The first fish Weed pulled out he gutted and stored separately. The one advantage of the North was that valuable food did not spoil because of the low temperature. Since it had a very long shelf life, it was possible for him to collect food to his limits.

From time to time, he also gathered dry branches separately for lighting a fire. Fire was needed not only for cooking, but also for melting snow to make water. Snow was everywhere so he filled the canteen with only a little bit of water and instead put the branches in his bag. Fishing learned for survival skills!

Eating too little food for a long time, he learned the secret of survival. Weeds that survived anywhere, Weed's appreciation of such life was evident.

While Weed was busy procuring food through fishing, Seoyoon and Alveron checked for safety and slowly approached.

“.....”

Seoyoon and Alveron now had considerable interest in fishing. They slowly put the fishing rods into the cold water and before long the caught fish emerged toward their forearms. The act was quite marvelous, but the fish were also considerably beautiful.

Priests were generally opposed to death, but Alveron was a follower of the Goddess Freya that believed in beauty and abundance! Like delicious and pretty things. Alveron swallowed his saliva as he watched the fish.

Seoyoon stared down at the flapping fish with curious eyes. Seafood was quite expensive in Versailles Continent. It was not that she didn't have money, but she was not deliberately picky with the food she ate. She had never experienced eating fish in Royal Road.

Weed asked while wiping the pot with white snow.

“If you're hungry, I can fix you something to eat?”

“.....”

Seoyoon thought for a moment and then nodded. She wasn't that hungry, but she had expectations on what kind of dish he would make.

“Then wait for a bit. It'll take some time.”

Weed started a fire with the branches he collected in advance. Cooking over the river, to prepare for the off chance of unknown danger, capable of blocking heat, he took off the cape he was wearing and laid it on the ground.

Vampire Cape!

Although it did not have very good stats, it had the strong attribute of blocking fire so he used it as a mat underneath the fire. The fire quickly became large. Weed hung a big pot over the fire and poured in plenty of oil.

“.....?”

To cook fish dishes, would you take out a pot and use it that way, it was incomprehensible. Instead of boiling several ingredients to make fish stew, he filled it to the brink with oil.

While increasing the temperature of the oil in the pot, Weed eagerly prepared the newly caught fresh pond smelt into sashimi. He extracted the meat from the bone and after covering the meat with tempura powder, he placed them in the pot.

Jigeul jigeul jigeul!

The fish meat fried in oil turned yellow.

‘What kind of dish is that?’

Seoyoon tilted her head.

The food Weed wanted to make was none other than fish tempura. Fish tempura was not common. Separating the meat into thin layers and then frying. All that remained was the crunch and

deliciousness. What was burdensome was you had to reduce the tempura part as much as possible.

“Now, let’s eat.”

Cooking was completed quickly. Lightly frying thin meat so not much time was needed. Seoyoon carefully put the fish tempura into his mouth.

‘Delicious. Really good.’

The flavor of the light, crispy fried fish harmonized exquisitely. The freshness was best when eating shortly after the fish is caught. In addition, there was the atmosphere since it was outside where the cold wind blew.

Seoyoon usually hated fried stuff. But this time, she ate as many as 8 until her stomach was satisfied.

“.....”

Seoyoon blushed.

‘What did I just do?’

It was so delicious that she ate without thinking.

Seoyoon stealthily glanced at Weed. But he did not say anything.

‘Lucky.’

Weed in his heart smiled with satisfaction.

‘She enjoyed eating a bunch.’

Now he felt more comfortable going around Seoyoon in the future. As long as he cooks for her, she wouldn’t attack or kill him.

Body and equipment equaling property, Weed was fearful of the bloody presence of a killer. But there was a bonus. Seoyoon would now aggressively do battle with monsters. If she knows the taste of a monster that appears, she will hunt even more thoroughly.

Feed them well. Handle them well.

Suddenly, Seoyoon was being treated similar to the Geomchis.

Chapter 3: The Wonder Of The Northern Region

Seoyoon logged out at the same time routinely.

It was to follow the schedule set for her like eating and then taking a walk.

Compared to that, Weed goes to the market early and cooks.

He minimized the time used onto most needed things for his social life such as going to the Dojang to train his body and sleeping.

Other than time used for utmost necessary things, he spends most of his time in Royal Road.

Thanks to that, Weed could use the time when Seoyoon wasn't around.

When Seoyoon wasn't there, he headed toward the highland of Morata.

Weed's own secret place.

"It's right here."

Weed felt very refreshed looking back to past.

The first giant sculpture!

The great sculpture made using the nature of Northern region.

The Wonder of the Northern Region.

This was where the grand piece Ice Dragon Sculpture was.

Ever since he came to Morata, he wanted to come here but he couldn't because he was with Seoyoon!

Before he made the Ice Dragon, he made the Ice Sculpture of Seoyoon using her as the model.

Since it was right next to it, he couldn't bring Seoyoon with him.

Full of excitement, Weed almost ran there.

‘Ice Dragon Sculpture! I’m finally back.’

He was full of expectation.

Even in this ridiculous coldness, much of it is reduced to the

point one can endure upon seeing the Ice Dragon Sculpture.

He could say that it was one of his few masterpieces.

But when Weed reached the top of the hill, he could only see a gigantic mountain.

A very steep ice mountain!

It was an ice mountain that did not exist before.

The height was pretty low, but since its slope was so steep, it could be seen as a gigantic ice block.

“No way! I’m absolutely positive this is where the Ice Dragon Sculpture is.”

No matter how much he looked, it was nowhere to be seen.

“I was here.....”

Even when he thought back very carefully, it was definitely here.

There’s no way he could mistake the location.

As he spent much of his time here, he could never forget the place.

But the Ice Dragon Sculpture wasn't here.

'Could have someone possibly brought my sculpture to life and took it?'

Weed shook his head.

There is the possibility.

Nowadays, there's an increase in the number of sculptors but there aren't many who reached a high level.

Even by coincidence, there's no way such skilled sculptor would come here, and there's a low possibility of the sculptor possessing the skill to bring sculptures to life.

One can bring life to others' sculptures, there's huge penalty following it.

Since it's the same as destroying another sculptor's piece, fame decreases and notoriety increases.

Additionally, since Art or Luck can decrease as well, it's rare for a sculptor to touch another's.

Then, he found the Ice Sculpture of Seoyoon.

Ice Sculpture of Seoyoon covered with considerable amount of snow!

If the ice mountain didn't protect it from the blizzard, it could've been buried under snow.

“Then, could it be....”

Weed moaned. Then suddenly looked at the ice mountain.

“Then this is the Ice Dragon Sculpture?”

Looking at it carefully, behind the ice mountain, the Ice Dragon's tail was sticking out.

Because it was left untouched for a long time, it became unrecognizable, covered with snow and ice.

Tons of snow and ice stuck onto the sculpture, so the size increased by twice or thrice of the original as well.

He stood in front of the ice mountain.

“So that's what happened. Well, doesn't matter since I found it. O, my precious sculpture. I have shared my life to you who was made with holy art spirit,

now awake from the deep slumber and join me. Sculpture Life Bestowal!”

Weed touched the ice mountain gently.

Crack!

The outer ice cracked and split.

Inside of it, something moved.

Kururururur

Strong vibration!

You have brought a sculpture to life.

The ability of the sculpture will be adjusted to level 382, according to current Art stat 812.

However, according to the ability of the exceptional Grand Piece, 10% of level will be added. Level is increased to 420.

Additionally, because it is a monster with wings that can fly, 10% of the level will be decreased as penalty.

Due to the special material formed with ice, 15% of the level is

added.

Instead Stamina and Health will be weakened.

Three attributes will be given to the lifeform.

The quality and ability of the attributes will differ according to the shape and level of the sculpture.

Attribute of Water (100%), Attribute of Ice (100%), Attribute of Magic (100%)

Water submits to none.

Possesses very strong Fighting Spirit with high Defence and Magic Defence.

It can freeze opponent using the power of coldness.

It can use magic with Ice property.

It can increase its ability to a maximum of 30% in cold regions.

However, it will weaken under warm weather.

Having high intelligence, it can use magic.

It can use any type of magic, but additional damage is added when using magic similar to its attribute.

Since it was a sculpture that was once the Wonder of the Northern Region, a special ability is added.

Ice Breath!

It can be used once a day. It will be the strongest attack.

5,000 mana is used.

10 Art Stat is permanently decreased.

The decreased stat can be recovered by creating sculptures or other artistic activities.

2 levels have dropped.

Due to the decrease of level, most recently raised stats will decrease by 10.

Decreased stats can be raised again when level raises again.

Please care for the sculpture with life.

When it loses its life, life has to given again to recover the soul.

When destroyed completely, it cannot be revived.

Kurururng! Kururung!

The vibration of ice mountain never ended.

Whatever happened, Weed just continued to wait for the Ice Dragon to awake.

Then his wish came true.

“Master. Master who has given me life, art thou there?”

“Yes. I’m here.”

Weed felt proud.

Unlike the Wyverns or Geuminu, the Ice Dragon seemed to have high intelligence.

But, the next sentence it said was enough to make Weed disheartened.

“Save me. I can’t get out. I can’t move because of the thick ice frozen on my body.”

“You useless idiot!”

For a moment, Weed seriously considered leaving the Ice Dragon like this and return.

‘I’m an idiot. Just why did I give life to this kind of....’

It was huge only in size and was extremely weak!

‘But it’s bit of a waste to just leave it.’

Weed ended up working himself.

Relying on a rope, he had to clean snow and ice climbing up and down the Ice Dragon.

After working for a day and night, the Ice Dragon’s head finally appeared.

The dignified face of a dragon.

Ferocious, strong looking eyes.

Long, white beard.

The Ice Dragon looked handsome.

“Master, please get rid of the ice covering my body quickly. I want to taste the freedom.”

“Alright. Wait a bit more.”

When Seoyoon logged in, Weed went to where she was, preparing food; in his spare time, he cleaned the snow covered Ice Dragon.

Simple and repetitive labor!

It was a labor where you had to hang on a high altitude getting hit by cold wind all you want.

All day, the Ice Dragon was moving its only free part, the head.

Weed pitied himself.

'Now I end up doing all kinds of labor.'

After clearing out ice and snow, he finally made one third of Ice Dragon's upper body free.

“Master.”

“What.”

said Weed coldly.

“I think I can get out with my strength.”

“Yeah?”

Weed climbed down the Ice Dragon’s body and backed up a bit as if to watch Ice Dragon free itself.

“Kuwwuwuwuwu!”

Ice Dragon roared very violently.

And tried to move its body to escape from the pile of ice.

“Urggg!”

The sound of giving all it got and trying all it could!

Weed watched the scene as nervous as to get his palms full of sweat.

‘Please get out.’

If the Ice Dragon can’t get out by itself, he had to get rid of more ice and snow.

Since he didn't want to anymore, he was praying with hope.

The Ice Dragon's body had a thick upper part and got thinner as it went toward lower parts.

On top of that, since its two legs were relatively weak, it seemed it just might be able to escape itself if it tried.

“Kururararararararara!”

Roaring Ice Dragon!

It had the power to make thin cracks form on nearby ice and blow snow everywhere.

Monsters froze as well due to the Ice Dragon's high Fighting Spirit.

This is the legendary Dragon Peer!

It couldn't be compared with the real dragon on every aspect;

still its outside seemed pretty much the same.

‘Definitely, it is my sculpture.’

Weed tightened his fist. He got a servant that did not lack

anything.

He can't make servants forever. Since he didn't have any plan to give life to sculptures, the Ice Dragon was more precious to him.

But that was only for a moment.

KuaDang!

The Ice Dragon fell down with no strength left in its legs.

The Ice Dragon lying with its stomach on the floor!

“Master, I have no strength left.”

To support its huge body, it did not have enough level.

In a way, a handicapped dragon with a huge, useless body!

After resting for a long time, the Ice Dragon raised its body.

“Master, give me a name.”

“Your name is.....”

Weed suddenly was full of regret.

Even if he did give it a name, he wasn't sure if it could do its share.

“Well anyway, let's just say Bingryong.” (lit. IceDragon)

Still a simple name easy to memorize!

“Thank you Master.”

Bingryong was very happy.

Then the face expression changed to a smiling one.

If it was a sculpture, it wouldn't be able to, but since it was given life, it could change facial expression as well.

“Master, you don't have to be that disappointed about me. My strength is slowly coming back.”

“What do you mean?”

“This land, this energy is giving me strength.”

Ice-formed Bingryong's body became even more white and clear.

Cold-absorbing Bingryong's body!

He could exert even stronger strength.

He raised its upper body using legs and arms and opened up tens of meters of wings.

Then the piled snow around it scattered right away.

The overflowing Bingryong's dignity!

Weed nodded.

‘Although it's only useful in the Northern region, he's not that bad.’

Although strength and health is pretty weak, Bingryong that fights using magic and breath!

Weed got a pretty excellent servant.

Seoyoon and Alveron were quietly collecting fishing rod and tools needed for hunting.

The work they've been doing to collect food finally ended.

After the preparation was finished, Weed breathed out deeply.

“Can’t do anything else. Never knew this would happen.”

".....?"

Seoyoon tilted her head, confused about Weed’s ambiguous words.

Alveron asked directly.

“Do you have some trouble?”

Weed turned his body toward where wind was coming.

Then his cape fluttered.

“Well, I’m not trying to show off or anything but..... just watch comfortably.

No need to be surprised either. Since this is nothing to me.

Huhu. Really, this kind of thing is like everyday life to me.”

“Sorry?”

“Bingryong!”

Weed yelled out loudly. He was trying to call his servant Bingryong.

“Master, I’m coming.”

Bingryong was curled up behind the farside mountain and flew up toward the sky.

An Ice Dragon that suddenly appeared out of nowhere!

He was waiting at an appointed place until Weed called him.

At where wind and snow came down harshly, a dragon made of ice opened up its wings widely.

Even Weed who made it and saw it over and over got goosebumps.

The electrifying appearance of the dragon.

The pressure and charisma from its terrifying size!

It was as if a mountain was moving.

The horizon was becoming red with the sinking sun.

Bingryong flying across that sky.

The body made of ice exerted a speechless mysterious aura.

Seleuleung.

Seoyoon took a step forward.

Bingryong was coming and she tried to fight it fearlessly.

Weed stretched out his arm and gently stopped her.

She looked back and silently nodded.

Then Bingryong opened up its mouth.

“Kurararara!”

It was a terrifying roar.

A roar that made Weed or Seoyoon shake from a far distance!

As he did it, Bingryong flew in the sky beautifully as planned priorly.

Every time it moved its tens of meters of wing, a great wind

pressure occurred.

Bingryong flew down in a quick speed and landed in front of Weed, Seoyoon, and Alveron with dignity.

It was the appearance of an over 300 meter long dragon.

“Kuhum!”

Weed approached Bingryong as he cleared his throat.

In reality, it didn't have as much dignity as it showed.

It looked nice, but it wasn't very efficient.

Even though it was humongous, because it had weak strength and stamina, it started to breath heavily if it walked just for a bit.

Leg that shakes when standing up for a long time. Sometimes it had a hard time just opening up its wings.

Even all that wouldn't have been possible if it wasn't in the Northern region.

Since it couldn't even take care of its own body, there wasn't much physical ability in reality.

Still, the presence Bingryong left was far from nothing.

“Don’t be surprised too much. He’s my servant.”

Weed easily climbed up to Bingryong’s body.

He only climbed up Bingryong, but his sight became more wide.

Seoyoon and Alveron looked very small.

They were looking up at Weed for a long time.

“Huhuhu.”

Weed made an arrogant smile.

He thought his current self would look very cool.

Weed riding on an Ice Dragon!

Cape was fluttering with wind and the Armor of Tallok had more shine as well.

To make things even better, the sky was turning red with the sunset.

The scenery was perfect with lighting and items adding onto the effect.

There's no way to look anything other than handsome when looking up from below.

Of course, he wasn't considering Bingryong, who was barely able to endure having Weed alone get onto his back, at all.

Weed suddenly had the urge to sing.

"I can't resist singing in such a place."

He took out Serena's Harp he got from Rhodium.

Diriring!

Weed's hand moved skillfully on the harp.

The harp sang with a clear sound.

Under the sky with sunset, playing the harp while sitting on an Ice Dragon.

Isn't this the look of a hero!

It was a beautiful scene that would only appear from a drunken

poets' stories.

Weed glanced at Seoyoon.

‘If it’s this much she might get fantasies about me.’

If he showed such capability and sense, it was possible.

Plus, if it’s this beautiful of a scenery, maybe she’ll come to like him.

Diriring. Diririri!

Weed continued to play harp looking at the sinking sun.

Drunk in the mood.

Weed’s harp playing skill wasn’t really bad.

He played few songs with the harp he had for a long time, so his skill increased.

After he played the harp Weed smiled.

His heart beat. To become a hero of this beautiful scenery. He felt excited.

Weed yelled toward Avelon and Seoyoon who were on ground.

“Let’s go to the Valley of Death. Ride on this Ice Dragon!”

"....."

Seoyoon didn’t say a word. She just took turn looking at Weed and Bingryong and stirred her head.

Weed offered once again.

“It’s fine. He’s my servant, so none of what you’re worrying about will happen. You don’t have to be afraid. You can ride him without any worries!”

They rode onto Bingryong and flew straight to the Valley of Death.

This was the transportation Weed planned on!

Alveron rode onto Bingryong without any problem.

But Seoyoon stood where she was and didn’t ride onto Bingryong.

“Hm!”

Weed felt a bit disappointed.

‘It would be a lot of help if I could bring her.’

The Berserker's focus in a battle!

He could never forget the way she massacred the monsters.

But he didn't really think Seoyoon would be necessary.

‘I completed all the quests no matter how hard they were.’

Of course, he had to go through all kinds of hardships.

All the effort he put to somehow complete quests starting from nothing went by his head.

The memory of him fighting against the Death Knight to recover Freya's holy item in Lavias, and the memory of taking care of the Paladins for months to exorcise the True Blood Vampires.

The exciting moment when he fought against the Legions of Undead, commanding Orcs at the Plains of Despair.

There was Mapan's indirect help, but he was always alone in critical moments.

There was no need to be disheartened because Seoyoon wouldn't be with him.

Weed decided.

'If she doesn't want to, there's no need to force her. It's bit of a disappointment though.'

If she says she can't go with him, he can't force her to go with him.

Weed told Seoyoon after making the decision.

"Rest at Morata. I'll finish and return quickly..... Let's go, Bingryong!"

That as a signal, Bingryong opened up his wings.

Bingryong was barely standing at that point.

Since he didn't have any strength left in arms or legs, flying in the sky was comparatively easier for him.

With Weed and Alveron on his back, Bingryong flew up to the sky.

After about 3 hours!

“Achoo!”

“Cough!”

Weed and Alveron returned to where they started riding on Bingryong and shaking.

You have caught a serious cold. Physical ability decreased by 45%

Skill effect decreased by 60% The cold can develop into other sickness.

The maximum possible health and mana decreased.

When using Sculpting skill, there's a possibility of sculptures breaking due to the cold.

With the cold that he never wanted to get again as a bonus!

The reason why everything turned like this was simple.

Bingryong was pretty fast in the sky.

The problem was Weed or Alveron who were riding on top of it had to shake in the cold.

It was cold enough just standing, but they flew through the sky at an incredible speed.

The higher the altitude, the temperature dropped and the wind got harsher.

In the end, they returned unable to endure any more.

As if she knew, Seoyoon was waiting at the spot with a campfire lit.

“Achoo!”

Weed approached the campfire as he coughed.

The old saying was right. If the head was bad, the body had to go through hardships.

Seoyoon thought as she lit campfire.

She was used to camping alone.

Watching carefully if there's monsters around, she collected wood, lit the fire, and cooked an edible food.

She learned how to cook in the wooden house from the

Instructor's wife.

Since that was when she first met Weed, she can say there was some sort of deep relationship.

Cooking for only one.

She only ate to make hunger disappear, so she only had to cook little.

Recipes were simple too, so she used what she got from hunting.

If she got sick of it, then she ate bread she bought from store or picked wild berries.

Due to such, her cooking skill didn't go over beginner level 3.

Then, she ate more than necessary as she ate Weed's cooked food.

'Delicious.'

It wasn't so bad to eat food made with someone's care instead of food made to just rid of hunger.

'pfft.'

When she was lightly thinking of such, she almost laughed out loud when she saw Weed and Alveron appear.

Their faces and whole bodies were covered with frost. They came back looking like poor frozen rats.

Even if it was Seoyoon, their appearance was horrible enough to make her laugh.

Weed walked with Seoyoon and Alveron toward the Valley of Death.

Using the information gotten from Morata, they moved only using safe areas.

He enjoyed fighting against monsters, but there is a right timing for everything.

They couldn't slow down to hunt while not even knowing what monsters come out from what area.

In the morning they walked while eating, and at night, they crawled into a cave or raised a tent to escape the coldness.

March full of hardship!

Since he still had a cold, he wore layers and layers of wolf leather clothes.

Additionally, there was a fierce silent mental battle.

Weed took one step back.

“Cough! The scenery here is great. Go ahead. I’ll walk slowly enjoying the view.”

Clear ice was standing out from the ground here and there.

Ice on such a wide plain was very mysterious.

Harsh wind blew on the earth covered with ice and snow.

Weed was planning to walk behind Alveron.

Alveron opened his mouth.

“Godess Freya has... achoo!... told me to be modest.”

Then took three steps back. Avelon slowly hid behind Weed.

“If you’re a Priest of the Church of Freya, you should lead the way for others.”

“My mission is to help Weed-nim. I’m sorry but I cannot stand in

front of you.”

“Kuhm!”

Weed coughed very loudly.

Truthfully, the wind was coming from the front right now.

Since the one in the front would be the coldest, they were trying to stand at the back.

But the wind changed its direction and now it came from behind.

Alveron hurried his steps.

“Goddess Freya has told me to lead the way.”

“I think I heard that too, Alveron.”

“Still, you wouldn’t have as much responsibility as me who is a Priest.”

“What are you saying? Monsters might appear. I’ll take the lead.”

There was nothing around, but Weed used danger as an excuse to walk in front.

Alveron hurried his pace to avoid the cold wind.

Only Seoyoon walked silently; sometimes looking at them dumbfounded.

The wind was cold.

“Achoo!”

Faster one runs, faster stamina runs out and thus faster the coldness comes.

Weed and Avelon were buying their own misfortune.

Just like that, during the day, when it's relatively warmer they walked; during the night they rested in a cave or at the bottom of a hill to take refuge from the wind.

Every night Weed showed off his cooking skill.

“Fish stew with plenty of garlic!”

It sounds terrible but in reality it's a stew that tastes great.

The stew gave warm a feeling throughout the whole body.

If they didn't even have such food, it would've been crazy to move while they had a cold.

Sometimes when the cold got worse because of the weather, they ate meat soaked in wine.

Countless stars shone in the unusually clear night sky.

The mealtime was the only time when they could rest and get rid of some tiredness from the harsh traveling.

Then one day after finishing their meal in a cave, Weed tried to take plates like usual.

Dalgrak.

But Seoyoon suddenly took away the plates from him.

The wooden plates that Weed created himself with currency used in Versailles Continent carved on it!

He carved in the picture to not forget that he should never forget to gain money even when he's eating.

Weed raised his head. Seoyoon's clear eyes were looking at him.

"....."

Weed's chest hurt.

'So she's taking away my precious plates just like this. She has some good eyes for items.'

They're not the best silver or gold plate set.

Just simple wooden plates good to hold food in.

According to rumors, there are some with jewels on them.

Verjua plates which had a price of over 6000 gold.

Unless it's someone with overflowing money, they're not plates that anyone can use.

Like this, good plates are often expensive.

Weed made plates himself to save money, but Seoyoon took even that from him.

But that was Weed's delusion.

Seoyoon wasn't trying to take it away from him.

Without saying anything she took it outside and wiped it with snow.

Seoyoon washing dishes!

Since she always got food from him, she was in her own way showing gratitude.

Bingryong!

He gracefully opened his wings and flew around the sky.

Then when he saw a monster, he landed and attacked whatever he saw.

“Kurarara!”

He fell down from the sky and viciously stumped on monsters or bit them.

There was almost no monsters left where Bingryong attacked.

It was to hunt for meals, but it was more to increase experience and fighting ability.

“I can’t stand anyone stronger than me! To be able to open my wings under this sky and over this earth, I need to be stronger.”

Bingryong knew by himself that he was a great being, but the fact that he couldn't even move his own body properly was very painful to him!

Since Bingryong's Fighting Spirit was high, ordinary monsters froze right away.

Bingryong didn't overlook anyone and hunted even those monsters.

Monsters gain skill experience and experience through killing.

Since it was possible for him to become even stronger depending on the effort put in, Bingryong did not rest.

“A stronger monster! To make myself stronger I need a stronger opponent! Appear, an opponent who can make my heart shake!”

Bingryong's roar shook the ice covered earth.

The Northern region's strong monsters

There were plenty of boss level or strong monsters in each ice mountains.

By level, there were many over level 400 here and there.

Furthermore, in the Forest of Massacre, strong monsters that are usually very hard to meet formed a food chain and lived there.

“Kuwwuwu!”

In the ice mountain, Bingryong stumped on weak monsters and when boss level monster really appeared he opened up his wings.

“Then see you later.”

Bingryong was a coward unlike his huge size.

Therefore, if he met an opponent similar to him or stronger than him, he ran away. He was growing in such a way.

Weed walked while clearing the snow busily.

“Alveron, just a bit more.”

“Yes.”

Last night lots of snow fell.

Thanks to that, it was harder to walk with snow piled up to their knees.

Serious cold doesn't get better easily.

Their stamina dropped easily, so they took turns to move forward.

“Weed-nim I'm sorry. I can't continue anymore.”

Weed and Seoyoon can manage somehow, but Alveron who was a Priest became tired easily.

“Oh well. Let's rest for a bit.”

Progress became slower because of Alveron.

Walking on cold, frozen land consumes lots of stamina.

Alveron who had weak stamina, couldn't walk much under normal circumstances either.

But since there's a pile of snow, he's having more difficult time.

Around them, there were only wolves who wandered around, looking for food.

‘There should be a way. A way to move faster. We need a transportation method.’

On the Versailles Continent there are various transportation methods.

Most popular method are horses!

They're traded commonly in towns or cities. Moreover, there are professional horse trainers.

A great horse that follows owner's command well, or a fast horse like lightening.

Due to horses that can be used even in battles, transporting time between hunting grounds or towns could be reduced.

'In this kind of coldness, all horses will freeze to death. Even if they survive, they wouldn't be able to run well.'

Horses are made to run well in plains as a basis.

To run on snow and ice covered land would be too much.

Then, an idea appeared in Weed's head!

'That's it! Why didn't I think of it earlier? There's saying chicken instead of pheasant.'

Wolves were wandering about.

When they meet Seoyoon or Weed they slowly go away. There was exceptionally a lot of wolves in this area.

Weed pleaded Seoyoon.

“Please help me catch wolves around this area.”

Seoyoon silently pulled out her sword thinking that it was for meat.

But Weed’s request was something bit different.

“You have to catch it without killing. But if possible, beat them up so they’ll think dying is better.”

"....."

Seoyoon took out her sword and beat up the wolves just enough.

To hunt wolves they didn’t even need to use skills.

Woof! Woof!

If monsters have intelligence, they choose to run away when against an impossibly stronger opponent.

When life dropped, scared wolves started to run away.

Seoyoon chased after wolves and broke their legs without any hesitation. It was to immobilize them.

Wolves sliding on an ice rink.

After becoming unable to fight, they were only waiting to die.

Then Weed approached them.

“Oh my, you poor things doesn’t it hurt?”

Wolves showed cautiousness.

It was human. One of the humans who made them like that approached them.

But Weed did not kill the wolves.

He applied herbs to the wounds and bandaged them.

Grrrrr!

Most animals would feel thankful.

But still, wolves did not abandon their violent side.

When their body recovered, they bared their fangs to bite off Weed.

Like a wild animal, it couldn't trust a human.

Weed backed up silently.

“Look like you're better, I will be going. Someone of your kind may be in pain somewhere after all.”

Usually he would hunt wolves down with joy, but Weed backed up without getting too greedy.

Grrr, Gr Gr Gr!

Wolves tried hard to stand up using their four legs.

It was time for them to go back to the base.

Then Seoyoon came again. Then she beat up the Wolves without a word

Like that, the Wolves got beat up and Weed cured them for several weeks.

So one hits, then one cures to make them feel thankful to them.

lick lick.

A young Wolf looked at him and licked his hand.

“Yeah. Good boy.”

Weed touched the wolves head.

He gave him a specially dried fish

Now, most Wolves wagged their tail.

Sometimes they showed their stomach.

They’ve been tamed!

They came to follow Weed.

But still, there were some who did not accept Weed until the end.

In a way, those were captain level of wolves.

Those kinds of ones Weed silently took them to the back of the hill, holding their neck.

“Hooohoo, you good boys. You must be hurt a lot. Then I should treat your wound with even more care.”

I think it's better to treat you over there than here.”

Soft smile and caring eyes!

There is no way to know what happened there, but when Weed came back his bags were a bit more packed.

The amount of meat and leather increased.

To the wolves, nightmarish events were happening.

GhingGhingGhing!

Wolves cuddled up to Weed when he returned, not knowing anything.

Alveron and Seoyoon felt a chill going up their spines, but Weed only had angelic smile on his face.

“Yes, you cute little things.”

They were wolves that already got used to Weed's touch and food.

“Eat lots.”

Weed gave wolves more than enough food.

When wolves were eating, he quickly made something using wood and monster tendon.

“I should make the bottom with steel blades to make it move forward easily and I should tie the tendon three times so wolves can’t get away.”

The object Weed made using his Smithing and Sewing skills to the fullest!

Even when it was put over their bodies, wolves did not resist at all.

Then it was completed.

Sled led by wolves!

It had different a shape from the chariot.

Tens of wolves lead from the front in a group, and the sled was made to slide over ice.

Since it was low, there was less resistance from wind, and because there were no wheels, it could slide over ice.

He made transportation that fit to the Northern region.

Weed commanded wolves to move forward.

The sled moved fast, sliding over snow and ice.

It gave incomparable joy to horse riding or any other transportation.

Fast enough speed and stability!

Alveron and Seoyoon could relax and enjoy the scenery.

Still, even if there's a sled, moving during the night was risky.

Not only were there strong monsters, the Versailles Continent was very unpredictable, so if they got swept away by a blizzard, it would be hard to survive.

At times like that, they needed to rest in warm caves.

Awoooooo!

Remorseful cries of wolves that rings every night.

After four days like that, they could arrive at the Valley of Death soon.

Weed first checked the geographic shape of the valley.

‘ It’s high, and it’s very dangerous.’

With the valley in the middle, there were very steep cliffs.

After the valley, there was a huge mountain.

Although it was not as dangerous as Yuroki mountain, it was a mountain covered in snow and ice.

Plus, plenty of monsters were on the top of the cliffs as if to prove that the name the Valley of Death was not for nothing.

“Keukuakuakua!”

Ice Troll with exceptional physical recovery with its body most fit to cold environment.

Ice Trolls that usually are active in one or two numbers, were gathered in the hundreds in here.

Unlike the green ordinary trolls, Ice Trolls were white like snow,

but their long arms and disgusting muscle body were the same.

The Ice Troll is a high level monster of over level 320.

Additionally, because they live in cold region, there are not many who have hunted them before; and due to troll's exceptional recovery rate, it was a very difficult monster to hunt.

“Kyao! Kyao!”

“Kuahah!”

After finding Weed and Seoyoon, the Ice Trolls yelled out in disappointment.

The Ice Trolls that enjoyed violence and massacre wanted to fight Weed and Seoyoon, but since the cliff was too steep, they couldn't go down and could only yell.

“Come here. Come up. I'll hug you. Do you have the confidence to spend the night of temptation with me? Then come.”

“Spend the long night with us. It's so cold here. Please hug me with your warm embrace.”

Lamia with female humanoid body!

With bright attractive smile, they were tempting Weed and Alveron.

They point using their slender fingers. As if they'd make any man's dream come true!

But if your eyes drift down to their lower half, one can only shake their head.

Lamia's lower half was like a snake.

Gradually thickening snake's body plus a long tail!

The Lamia had a fighting ability like the Ice Troll and high intelligence as well. She was a highly difficult monster to handle.

Like this, there weren't only Lamia and Ice Troll.

Lizardman and Lizardking!

Evil Spirit Soldier that are protecting the Valley of Death.

Servant Evil spirit tracker, Priest of Diverse, it was full of local monsters as well.

"I have nothing go easily."

Weed muttered unconsciously.

There was no way such fun will happen like massacring all the monsters at bottom of the valley.

Rather, reversely, they needed to attack monsters on the top of the valley.

Weed and Seoyoon started to investigate around the Valley of Death.

Then, they were able to find a castle not far from the valley.

Niffleheim Kingdom's Vent Castle!

This was definitely what the Morata residents were talking about.

'They said the Kingdom's knights reside there.'

The old castle was build using rectangular rocks.

Although there were many broken places due to time, but... yes.

"Do not come near!"

yelled the soldier on top of the castle wall.

There were some places where human cannot live.

The Soldier's Armor was on the verge of collapsing.

Weed could wear such armor. He had no intention letting items go to waste.

“Do not approach me!”

“ We have come to help you all!”

Weed yelled, but no one listened.

“I don't know what kind of monster you are but I'm not getting fooled anymore!”

“We are human and we would like to enter.”

“Shut up! If you come any more near, we'll attack!”

Then an urgent bell sound came.

The soldiers were aiming at Seoyoon.

"....."

Weed became speechless. They had no trust.

In such situations, the most necessary lesson is now.

Weed looked at Alveron. Alveron knew those eyes...

“As a Priest of the Church of Freya, I have learned recovery and blessing magic professionally. I will stand for them.”

“The Church of Freya? We don’t trust anyone. We’ll attack if you approach any more.”

Vent Castle did not allow anyone to approach.

Even if Weed is famous, it didnt reach the castle.

For Fame to spread, it needs to be passed from person to person, but since Vent castle has no communication with the outside world, it is useless..

‘I can’t go in here.’

Weed could do nothing but to leave Vent Castle behind.

There was no way to get in, and there was no need to.

‘It's a poor castle anyway. Even if I force my way in, I'll just get robbed like in Morata or cut down to pieces.'

Weed came back to the Valley of Death, preparing to attack;

at that moment, they found him.

“Kuahahahahahahah!”

Wyverns screamed due to coldness.

The expensive Geumini flew through the sky and they finally arrived.

“Yes, you worked hard.”

Weed touched them both.

Then using the wolf leather he had, he made clothes for the Wyverns.

Just that due to poor the condition of the materials, the quality of the clothes was way lower than usual.

Wah-il, Wah-thul, Wah-sam, Wah-oh, Wah-yook, Wah-chil!

Originally Wyverns have vicious personality, but the ones born

from sculptures were different.

“My clothes are more pretty!”

“Look at my leather clothes’ color!”

As expected from artistic Wyverns they were showing off their clothes.

Wolf leather that hasn’t been properly taken care of.

Ripped loose, low level leather made cover-up cloth.

Wyverns were very happy wearing it.

“Definitely, our master’s the best!”.

The gift cleared away all the hatred they had toward Weed for making them fly all the way to the Northern Province, and even made them feel thankful to him for making them the clothes.

In truth, Weed complained while he was making clothes with wolf leather.

“Unable to do anything because the weather’s bit cold. Useless bunch!”

For them to move normally, he had to make them clothes.

So, he was forced to make them without putting even an ounce of care in making them.

“GolGolGol.”

Geumini whose body is entirely gold got some clothes from him.

The clothes that Weed wore during his noob years!

He gave Geumini the sword and armors which had the lowest possible durability and could only be sustained through countless numbers of fixing and fixing again.

Equipments handed down for generations.

The Wyverns and Geumini had pathetic appearances for having a cheap and stingy owner.

Still, the Wyverns held their heads up.

“My clothes are prettiest!”

“Nope. My clothes. My clothes are even more pretty!”

“Wanna fight me?”

“Yes, fight!”

Violent Wyverns trying to fight each other saying that their clothes are the best!

“My clothes are the best. GolGolGol!”

Even Guemini joined the fight to not lose its pride and took out his sword.

One was a Clay Sword. The useful sword Weed acquired in Lavias!

Another sword was a great one.

Agatha’s Sacred Sword from the Church of Freya!

He auctioned away another one, but he gave the one left to Geumini.

Using both swords and attacking opponent like a lightening was Geumini’s specialty.

It was when Weed’s underlings were trying to fight with their pride on line.

“Kurarrarara!”

Bingryong appeared with an amazing roar!

The long humongous body that is hundreds of meters long.

The open mouth that looks like it'll launch out a Breath any time!

Detailedly depicted beard.

Moving its long tail left and right, Bingryong flew through the sky in high speed.

“Kurarrarara!”

He roared with force once again.

Due to the force of the moment, the Wyverns and Geumini couldn't move.

Compared to the enormous Bingryong Wavyer's huge body looked like a child's toy.

As Bingryong approached, the Wyverns and Geumini bowed their head.

They have completely accepted Bingryong as the top in their

league.

Kuung!

Bingryong landed heavily with force. The ground where he landed shook as if an earthquake happened.

He was showing off.

That confident and pompous appearance!

But Bingryong's legs couldn't bear the weight.

CheulPuDuk!

Bingryong fell on the ground right then.

It desperately moved its short legs. It tried to get up using its wings too, but it wasn't easy.

Not only was the ground slippery, it lacked strength to make its huge body stand up.

Suddenly the mood became cold.

Where the Wyverns, Geumini, and Bingryong were, an endless coldness flowed.

Chapter 4: Conquest

After resting for a day, Weed started to focus on attacking the Valley of Death in the morning, right after the sun came up.

Although his condition was worse by 20% due to cold, he didn't have the luxury to rest and fully recover himself.

"It's common to get a cold. To avoid getting a cold in the Northern Province is only a luxury. Alveron!"

Alveron was sitting there when Weed turned around.

A dependable companion he can always trust!

As expected from the candidate of Pope, he had immense amount of holiness.

Unlike most strong characters, he was comparatively nice and obedient, he was very useful.

"Yes."

"We're confronting a very important battle. Bless Wah-il, Wah-thul, Wah-sam, Wah-oh, Wah-yook, Wah-chil, Geumini, and Bingryong.

“Yes, I understand.”

Weed called out the names of each and every one of the sculpture creatures.

This scrupulous consideration!

But in truth, they get sulk easily because they're life forms full of jealousy and selfishness.

‘Just for what good did I make those kind of things.’

Weed couldn't do anything else than to sigh whenever he looked at his sculptures.

Bottom-low intelligence!

Greed towards food!

Greed towards money and items!

They were servants he could never trust.

But sculptures couldn't do anything about it. Like the saying children take after their parents,

their level is comparatively high thanks to Weed's high Art stat;

but Weed's intelligence and wisdom stat are pathetically low.

Due to that, only simple and idiotic ones came out.

Alveron cast holy magic.

“Undermine the dark power which tries to weaken him. Divine protection. Maximize he who fights against evil darkness. Bless!”

A white light poured out from Alveron and wrapped around the Wyverns, Geumini, and Bingryong.

A Priest's special skill that raises Defence and Strength.

It also raised various Element Resistance.

Alveron cast another holy magic onto this.

“Help his breath of life to not leave him. Hand of Life.”

Skill that adds great amount of health!

Alveron became stronger while Weed wasn't with him.

‘Yes, he's very useful.’

Weed showed a disappointed expression.

Compared to when they arrived at Morata, lots of time passed, so he became much stronger.

But Alveron was his companion only for a specified quest.

Since he can't order him around once the quest ended, it was such a waste.

“Master I will attack.”

Wah-il fluttered its wings.

After getting various blessing magic, he became full of strength and showed his vicious nature that enjoys battles.

Weed didn't necessarily stop him.

“Alright. Just be careful. Geumini.”

“Master. Why call me? Gol gol gol.”

“Fight riding on Wah-il.”

“It's cold. Can't I rest nearby camp fire? Gol gol gol.”

Geumini was made of gold.

Just like his expensive gold body, he was very lazy.

Weed replied very honestly,

“If you don’t fight, I’ll melt you.”

“I will follow my Master’s words. Gol gol gol.”

“Take this bow.”

Weed gave him the bow he was equipped with.

Flutter!

Making a bit frivolous sound, the six Wyverns flew up to the sky.

The skilled Wyverns that survived fighting against the Legion of Undead.

Wyverns circled in the sky with dignity.

Just like an eagle preying, looking for a moment of opening!

But Wyverns quickly switched their minds.

“Gosh I’m gonna freeze to death. Let’s attack.”

Although it was morning already, because of the cold atmosphere, the Wyverns’ physical capability was being held down.

Thus, the Wyverns decided to not circle the sky out of unnecessary.

With Wah-il as a lead, they flew up the sky.

After continuing like that, they dived straight toward the monsters on the top of the Valley of Death.

The Wyverns attacked while diving down with thrilling speed.

Using steel-hard claws, they scratched Ice Troll or Lamia.

“Kill!”

“This is our land!”

“Fight!”

Ice Trolls yelled warcries and attacked using tridents while

Lamias used their spell, flicking their tongue like a snake.

“Eye of Temptation!”

Spell of Lamia. Regardless of race, it weakens all the men’s strength.

On the bottom of the valley, Weed though he made a big mistake.

“Did Lamias have such ability?”

Lamias are usually considered as rare monsters, so not much about their abilities are known.

Only that their level is around late 200s, but there’s nothing about how they battle.

The spell Lamias were using was a kind of curse, but it couldn’t be dispelled with holy magic. They were tricky opponents to face.

This was the Lamia’s specialty that wasn’t known to the public.

But the Wyverns were not one bit effected.

“Why aren’t we effected?”

“What the heck.”

“Couldn’t it be because we are great beings?”

“That should be it. Because we are so great, we’re not getting affected by such petty curse.”

“Wait! But are we male or female?”

No Wyverns could answer the sudden question by Wah-sam.

Weed then realized.

‘There are no males among them!’

When the Wyverns were sculpted, Weed was busy warring against the Legion of Undead.

There was not much time, but he had to sculpt fast without caring about quality.

Bulging belly and angulated face!

Because he was on a race against time when sculpting, he couldn’t make that something that defined their sex.

Thanks to it, the Wyverns had a body that cannot tell their sex.

Then what of Geumini?

In the case of Geumini, starting with the face, he clearly was made looking like a male.

But Geumini was also not affected by Lamias' temptation.

Somehow, sometime, Geumini was busy looking himself in a mirror.

“This shining aura. This golden face. There will be no one more beautiful than me in the world.”

Telling himself how beautiful he was, he was in love with himself!

In the end, no one fell for the Lamias' temptation.

“Poison of Eucla!”

Since their spell didn't work, they started spraying deadly poison all over the place.

Some stung poison needles.

Blue poison smoke spread with the wind, Ice Trolls swung their spears all around.

Wyverns were flying in the sky and diving from time to time to scratch and peck with their claws and beaks to attack Lamias and Ice Trolls.

Thanks to the incredible blessing effect, the Wyverns' physical ability expanded unusually.

They could fight on equal terms against one to two Ice Trolls!

But there were tens of Ice Trolls.

“You dirty birds! Die!”

“That way!”

Whenever the Wyverns went close to the ground to attack, Ice Trolls gathered around.

When that happened, Wyverns flew upward to avoid focused attack.

“You cowardly birds!”

“Come down again. Let us fight!”

Ice Trolls yelled, full of rage.

If they were Orcs, they would've went down to fight fairly.

But the Wyverns had a terrible and cowardly personality.

“You lowly lives who don't even know how to fly.”

“Why don't you guys try to come up here?”

Wyverns cleverly scratching with claws and attacking!

It didn't do much damage to Ice Trolls.

The Troll's special immense physical regeneration.

Most scars recover with a speed that can be seen with the eyes.

Since they had monstrous recovery speed that would allow them to grow new arms and legs when they were cut, it was impossible for the Wyverns to kill Ice Trolls.

“They're going that away!”

“Let's hurry up and kill them!”

When Wyverns approach the ground, Ice Trolls run towards

them without even getting a bit tired.

Trolls that are much taller than Orcs.

That tall body ran with full speed on icy paths and slipped numerous times.

When tens of Ice Trolls fell, they got tangled up by themselves, so they wouldn't be able to get up for awhile.

At those chances, Wyverns would scratch and peck viciously.

Although Ice Trolls recovered fast, stamina was used up very fast.

This, rather than direct attacks, was the main method of weakening Ice Trolls.

Only picking out the Trolls that fell on ground, Geumini shot with great accuracy.

Due to the wind caused by huge flying Wyverns, snow stacked on a side of the valley crushed down.

On the other side of the valley, there were Lizardmen led by a Lizard King, Ghost Soldiers, Servant and Ghost Followers were waiting.

“We just have to face one side at a time.”

Weed sent the Wyverns purposely to where Ice Trolls and Lamias were.

It was impossible to fight against swarming monsters on top of the valley.

But thanks to the geographic factor of the Valley of Death, they didn't have to face them at the same time.

They just had to face enemies on one side of the valley.

In other words, divide and conquer!

“Master, we can't win by ourselves.”

At then, Wah-il was asking for help.

As Wyverns who can fly, they rarely got into a dangerous situation.

Because if their wings were fine, they could fly away anytime!

But due to numerous monsters on the ground, dealing critical attacks was impossible.

Against 5~6 Ice Trolls whenever they dived, only a few Wyverns had trouble just trying to shake them off.

“Bingryong, it’s your time to shine.”

“Alright. Master.”

Finally, on Weed’s order, Bingryong who was waiting opened up its wings widely and flew.

“Kururarara!”

With impressive Dragon Peer, Ice Troll and Lamias became atrophied.

Roaring Bingryong flew and stumped on Ice Trolls.

Pudeudeuk!

His weight was an attack ability itself. Bingryong flattened trolls by simply stepping on them!

Whenever Bingryong moved its wings and kicked, Ice Trolls and Lamias fell away.

Although Bingryong was scolded how useless and strength-less he was, it was only because he was too heavy!

Against light enemies, he had great potential.

When Bingryong moved his wings or legs, Ice Trolls fell without any chance.

“Kururarara!”

When he roared from time to time, surround shook.

Bingryong, whose strength increased with Alveron’s blessing, was on a roll.

“Kill him.”

“Destroy that bulk of ice!”

Ice Trolls charged.

Although there were many who slipped and fell from getting tangled among themselves, more than five of them stuck onto Bingryong and swung spears and axes.

And from deep within the Valley of Death, a countless number of Ice Trolls appeared.

The number was over 100!

More Ice Trolls than what they were facing appeared.

There was reason behind as to why this place was called the Valley of Death.

At then, Bingryong stretched his wings and flew up.

Then breathed in deeply.

“Huuuup!”

Atmosphere got sucked into Bingryong’s huge nostril.

His normally bulging belly became even more bulged.

Then the body made of ice became more and more white.

Then, Bingryong’s mouth became wide open.

“Puwaaaaaa!”

Ice Breath!

He used his ultimate skill that can only be used once a day.

The Ice Trolls that were charging froze on the spot.

They were frozen, stuck with the ground.

“Run.”

“Run away!”

Ice Troll and Lamias became confused.

Monsters that got directly hit by Bingryong’s breath were on the verge of death, and the ones that was around the main attack spot partly froze and became very slow.

The intense aura spread by the dignified dragon.

Sadly, it was a skill that could be used only once a day.

Although it froze a considerable number of monsters, even more Ice Trolls showed up. Bingryong was busy trying to defend.

“Bingryong, drop them to the bottom.”

Finally Weed gave an order.

There’s more than several monsters crowded in the Valley of Death; he couldn’t just leave those endlessly appearing monsters to

Bingryong or the Wyverns.

“Master, I will execute your order.”

As Bingryong thrashed on the top of tightly spaced valley, Ice Trolls got pushed away and rolled down the valley.

“Gueheak!”

The Ice Trolls that fell down the cliff was Weed or Seoyoon’s to fight off.

“Ahchoo!”

Weed took the lead even when he could barely stand due to the cold.

“Gosh it’s killing me.”

His body was hot from fever.

Really, the Valley of Death was just too cold. Not only because of monsters, the temperature was basically too low.

A strong wind that can even freeze any living beings blew.

The wind that came from the center of the valley worsened Weed

and Alveron's cold for every little second it was blowing.

Enduring his shaking legs, Weed took out his sword.

"I can only try my best. Moonlight Sculpting Blade!"

The sword skill with holy light flowing around it.

Whenever Weed swung his sword, the trajectory of the light remained for a long time.

Unlike usual straightly slaying or stabbing an enemy, a sword that synchronizes body and sword to flow freely!

The sword skill Weed trained for a long time remained and appeared as light.

Wobble!

Whenever his strength loosened from his hand and foot, Ice Trolls approached dangerously.

Wounded Ice Trolls.

Along with loud chest pounding sounds, they came, holding spears and axes high up.

“Kyao!”

Ice Trolls breathed out heavily and swung axes.

‘It’s dangerous.’

Weed ducked and dodged the axe.

Then, at the lowered state, he rolled forward, passing after slaying their knees.

He doesn’t usually use such method, but he was in a pinch.

Over ten Ice Trolls fell down the cliff.

Although their Stamina dropped considerably, it did not mean their attack did as well!

They had higher levels than Weed as well, so he had to take caution.

“Kurrrr. Cowardly bastard.”

“Kurrr. You will die by our hands.”

Ice Trolls breathed out rapidly out of anger.

Whenever they breathed out, white foggy breath came out.

‘Too many.’

Weed’s eyes lowered.

When danger approached, he can judge the situation rationally with a panoramic view.

If his body was in his normal state, he would be able to get by, but in his current state with a cold, his Strength, Agility, and Health were overall very weakened.

Since his combat skill mastery was lowered as well, it was the same as to say all his strong points were gone.

“Still I can’t give up. I can’t back up now.”

Weed held up his sword.

If he can’t finish them off quickly, he can drag the fight on although it would be a bit risky.

Even if he got damaged a bit, he had to wait for an opening and deal them one-by-one.

“Since I can’t let Alveron die.”

Behind Weed, there’s the slow-at-running Alveron.

So he had to hold his ground no matter what.

Phusuk!

At then, a light flashed in between a group of Ice Trolls.

Seoyoon took care of the monsters that went toward her and helped Weed.

The formation of Ice Trolls that were surrounding Weed fell apart.

“Kurrrrr!”

“There’s the human female who have murdered our friends.”

“Kill the woman.”

As Ice Trolls attacked Seoyoon, Weed could rest for a short moment.

‘The real battle begins now.’

Although Weed's condition wasn't normal, he continued to participate in the battle.

Sharp and exquisite lines of light overlap and creates ominous beauty.

Offensive side of Moonlight Sculpting!

Like the originally artistic class job, the sword skill was beautiful as well.

Compared to it, Seoyoon used much more simple attacks.

She dodges monster's attack with refined, dancing-like movements.

Then when she sees an opening, she cuts away the opponent right away.

If it doesn't die because of its monstrous recovery rate, she hit the neck again.

It was a cruel method, but in truth, it was much more gentle compared to Weed's.

He got confident when good amount of Ice Trolls were taken care of.

Weed said to Ice Trolls.

“Try to hit me.”

“Kuaaaa!”

Raged Ice Trolls attacked Weed.

Whenever they did, Weed closed his eyes.

Closed Eye skill mastery has increased.

Toughness raised by 1.

Weed was using Ice Troll's hits to raise his skills!

When his life became minimum, he would finally hunt the Ice Trolls.

Then when he kills an Ice Troll, he held a cup carved out of wood near its body.

“This precious blood! Blood keep on coming out.”

Ice Troll Blood was an important material needed for making

healing potions.

Compared to money, one bottle would equal almost 1gold. It was a rare item.

A rare item wanted by many and sold by few.

A bottle of such valuable potion ingredients could be gotten here when they hunted 3~4 Trolls.

An item placed highest on the Dark Gamers' must-get list, Ice Troll Blood.

That was literally taking even a last drop of blood (for selling). Such was Weed's method of hunting.

*

To gain money, Yurin was doing small quests.

"If you clean these dishes in an hour, I will give you 3 copper more"

In the restaurant Yurin was working, used dishes were stacked up like a mountain.

They had food leftovers disgustingly stuck on them and they

smelled very bad.

To the point where no one would dare clean them.

“Well, I’ll have to try.”

Yurin rubbed the dishes very hard.

Cleanly, to the point they would shine.

‘Let’s get money. For the future. To buy a skill book, I will to save bit by bit.’

Yurin wanted to take the greatest and honest path.

Her target was to become a great mage who can kill ten thousands of monster with crowd control magic!

Covering an open field with flames, causing floods to sweep away enemies.

It was a dream like story, but it was still possible.

In the beginning of Royal Road, there was a mage who fought against a tens of thousands of monster army on the commercial from Unicorn Inc.

Due to that, there were many players who chose to be a magician.

They had weaker physical ability than warriors.

They did not have a high Health that would allow them to survive even after several beatings.

Even when monster a comes, they'll be busy running away, and it was magicians who unluckily got into a trap and would die from it.

Rather, it's weaker than in reality, so they wouldn't be able to carry a bag with enough items in.

A job that has to wear a thin leather robe and walk around with a cane and cannot even wear cool armors like warriors!

Despite all that, it was mages who had infinite magic attack and the highest attack power.

Ding!

- Fame increased by 1 due to cleaning dishes thoroughly.- Because you have completed a chore, you're now known more in the village as a person who's good at dish washing.

The restaurant owner came.

“Thanks for your hard work. I will give 3 more copper as promised.”

“Phew. Thank you.”

Yurin smiled and took the money.

After this, she could get more jobs easily.

“I heard you take importance in sanitary. The items in our item shop are buried under a pile of dust. Could you clean it for me? I’d like you to finish within five hours.

I will give you 30 copper for an hour.”

“Yes. Just trust me.”

Yurin moved her working place to the item shop.

It was a job to clean the items that people don’t usually look for.

As Yurin cleaned up the place, she studied up various items she didn’t know about before.

She could just clean away dust she can see.

But Yurin cleaned each and every item very thoroughly.

She cleaned the items overnight, changing the dry cloth tens of times.

Ding!

You have cleaned the items in the Item Shop completely.

Fame increased by 2.

The Item Shop owner looked at the shining items and became overjoyed.

“You’re the first person who took care of the job this thoroughly... I will especially give you 20% more.”

“Thank you.”

“Ah, should I introduce you a job? See that armor shop over there? Although it’s doing well, there seems to be items that don’t really sell. Who knows if someone will buy them if they’re cleaned up and displayed. I heard the owner was looking for someone to hire so try the place. If you tell him that I introduced you, he wouldn’t reject you.”

“Yes, thank you.”

Yurin cheerfully said farewell and went to the armor shop.

Nothing was much different there either.

It was again, to clean old armors.

Now, she became a master at cleaning.

“They’re armors and shield that protect one’s life, so be extra tenacious.”

“Yes, I will.”

“I don’t really trust you, but since a good friend of mine introduced you, I will trust you with the job. Careful to not get metals wet. I will pay you 50 copper for an hour. Compared to the job you have to do it’s not too little right? Since there’s lot to sell, if you finish in a day, I will give you some bonus. Since the work you have to do is limited, work hard.”

The owner of the armor shop was a huge person with a mustache and meticulous personality.

Yurin worked there successfully as well.

She cleaned the armors to the extent that not even a grain of dust would be left.

Rhodium had lots of beggars.

Those who tried to live with ease by getting even a bit from the tourists who came to look at splendid art works and scenery!

It wasn't such a bad choice.

Since Rhodium became a tourist city, one can expect generous treatment.

Although art is recognized as a hungry job, one can earn as much as doing a chore even when one becomes a beggar.

But one can only gain fixed amounts of money.

Getting bigger and bigger jobs as she went, Yurin worked anywhere doing anything she could to gain money.

'After buying a spell book, I should buy a ring that raises magic attack. I'd love to have a robe too, but that'll be hard to buy.'

To become a mage, lots of money is required.

So Yurin worked like crazy.

She tried to work off anything to gather money.

If she became a store clerk, she could gain money more easily,

but those kind of job don't give much.

Thus, dreaming of becoming a great mage, she jumped into the harsh road of labor.

Then one day.

Now she raised friendliness with most of the store owners and raised fame.

When she was washing dishes, the restaurant owner called her.

“Yurin I have a favor to ask of you.....”

Yurlin replied as she smiled.

“Yes. Ask me for anything. Is there more to wash?”

“No, it's not that. When you go near that river over there, an old man comes out alone every night when moon comes up. I borrowed something from the old man. Can you return it for me?”

The restaurant owner showed her the book.

“What is this?”

“It's about most recent pictures and drawing that's popular in

the kingdom.

I borrowed it several days ago, but I just can't return it because of busy restaurant work.

I hope you can return it for me.”

Ding!

Cook Balon's Request

Balon is a very prideful cook. He is famous for not making food just for anyone.

Go to the Hesny River and return the book to the person Balon talked about. Difficulty: E

Reward: 30 copper

Quest requirement: A person Balon trusts.

Chapter 5: In the Cave

While inside the small, rusty cave, Weed's body was getting hotter with fever.

His already serious cold became worse.

-You are fatigued. Physical ability is lowered by 62%

You cannot use battle skills.

Due to the decrease of Life and Stamina, you cannot move.

You may experience dizziness.

If not treated properly, you may die.

The Northern Province was much colder than the Central Continent. Four out of seven days in a week it snowed, and a strong, cold wind blew. The Valley of Death was even colder, so his Stamina dropped to very low as he pushed himself too much by travelling and battling.

The Valley of Death Quest required the participant to not only fight against strong monsters, but against difficult weather too. It was hard to endure even in a normal, healthy condition, but since he had this cold, his situation became much worse.

The cold had worsened as he progressed, and now he couldn't even move anymore.

His forehead and back were already wet with sweat. He couldn't even control his shivering body properly.

‘I’m going to die like this again.’

Weed wanted to cry out.

It’s not like he was fighting deadly monsters, yet he was about to die from a mere cold!

Normally, he would at least have been able to recover life with Alveron’s holy magic. If he recovered life, there would be a greater chance of getting rid of the cold.

But even that was impossible now.

“Cough. Cough.”

Alveron was huddling in a corner, coughing.

Just like Weed, he got the terrible cold and was on the verge of death.

Even when you're a candidate for Pope, a cold didn't look over you.

'I'm really going to die now.'

Due to lowered Stamina and Life, he couldn't even raise a finger.

Surrounding them was just ice and snow.

They somehow found a cave near the Valley of Death and came in, but it didn't help much to shield from the iciness.

If they got terribly cold in such a place, they had no other way out but to die.

Since his ill body would remain and freeze away, even if he logged out it would make no difference. It seemed like he could not avoid death.

'I was careless.'

Although he was filled with regret, it was not something he could undo.

He used up all the herbs that may have been useful against illness when cooking soup in Morata Village.

‘Now I can really do nothing.’

Weed closed his eyes silently.

The rocky ground felt as cold as a sheet of ice, and cold air came in from everywhere. In these circumstances, a cold could only get worse.

His hands and feet were already getting numb. Death was approaching.

‘Just why did I have to get sick.... so pathetic.’

With his eyes closed, he looked back to his past.

Ever since he was little he took any job for the sake of money. To help his grandmother who was working in the street market, even at such an old age, he would work anywhere as long as they took under aged employees, when he should have been playing with friends of his age.

Since it was illegal, the working conditions were the worst possible, and he never got paid on time.

Still, because he worked over vacation without sleeping, he could gain a bit of money.

But now he had a type of work that he have never done before,

and by pushing himself too much, his body couldn't endure.

“You weakling! Are you acting because you don't want to work?

“If you're going to work like this, then give up right now!”

The boss, who hadn't paid him his three weeks' worth of payment, yelled at him.

Even when he was sweating all over from fever, and dark rings forming around his eyes, the boss never admitted that Hyun was sick.

Back then he couldn't eat much, so his stamina wasn't very good, and because of that he was always scolded on.

Other employees, too, scolded him whenever he did something wrong, whether big or small.

“Useless one.”

“Why should we use someone as brainless as him?”

“It's better to not have you here at all. You only cause problems.”

“You trash! Because of you we have even more work now.

Just go steal or something instead of working here.”

He endured those countless snarling comments.

On that day, he wanted to get up and work if possible, but his body just couldn't move.

But no one worried about him nor did they tell him to go to a hospital. When he was young, he curled up and cried in a corner where no one was. It was very painful.

After that day, he hated getting sick the most.

To someone like him who had to support his sister, getting sick was an unthinkable luxury. But, he couldn't help but feel sad and pathetic when pain came.

“Damn.”

Weed felt his eyes getting watery.

‘I'm as weak as the amount of tears I let out. I'll never cry.’

He gritted his teeth and endured. This time his pain wouldn't stay much longer.

His body was weak all over and his Life status was still

decreasing.

He was alive so far thanks to his monstrous amount of Endurance, but soon, he would die.

He just had to wait a bit for the nausea to die, and then he too will die completely.

Only, death is not the end.

Right away, a special skill activates as a Blood Necromancer.

Revival as Undead.

According to his level and skill mastery, he's going to revive as an undead. As an undead soldier who rules over black magic and the power of death.

When he dies, at the least his cold will disappear.

‘I'll just have to level up and get masteries back up like a mad person for a while.’

With his eyes closed, he waited for death.

Without hunting or using his sculpting skill, this was first time he just lied down and rested completely like this. When fighting or

resting for Life and Stamina to recover, he was always making a sculpture. The reason for Weed's fast growth was because of such focus and effort.

But even as time passed, he didn't die.

‘What's happening?’

Weed opened his eyes partially.

His body ached all over and opening his eyes caused dizziness, but he wanted to check the situation.

And now he could see the reason!

Seoyoon!

She disappeared to somewhere and brought mountainous amount of firewood.

‘It wouldn't have been easy.....’

Around here, there isn't much wood that can be used for a fire.

To get firewood, she would have had to go through blizzards and walked far.

Seoyoon stacked up the wood and lit the fire.

As the surrounding air became warmer, Weed could feel a bit of warmth seeping into his flesh.

Seoyoon took out a small iron can.

It had become black from using it so often for cooking over an open fire.

It is sold for 4 coppers in a general store, but it was dropped when hunting a fox near a castle. It was something not even beginners used.

Seoyoon glanced at Weed as if she was embarrassed for taking out beginner's iron can.

Weed closed his eyes again.

It was because his dizziness became worse as his body temperature rose.

‘Thirsty.’

Weed had a serious thirst and lots of pain. The thirst was due to the sudden burning heat of the flames.

But soon, something touched his lip.

‘What is this?’

An unknown scent came from it.

Weed opened his mouth.

Then, something dripped into his mouth little by little.

It was porridge.

Using the cooking skill she had, Seoyoon had made porridge and was feeding Weed. The problem was that the porridge was extremely salty and spicy! ‘Stop feeding me that stuff!’ Weed screamed inside his head.

She was feeding him the worst porridge possible, and it didn’t even taste right! Plus, the porridge smelled fishy.

Weed could guess what she used to make it.

‘She put smelt in it.’

Seoyoon put rice she had for emergencies into water along with smelt to make porridge.

The porridge was made as if she tried to fry the smelt, but because she didn't clean the smelt properly, the fishy smell remained strongly.

The rice wasn't fully cooked either, and tasted terrible.

Seoyoon was forcibly feeding Weed bad porridge such as this!

“Urgh!”

Even when Weed closed his mouth, Seoyoon opened his mouth with force and poured the porridge in.

If he had strength to speak, he would've stopped her.

But Weed's dimming strength was literally halted right before he died, so he couldn't speak even a word.

After eating bit by bit, his hunger disappeared.

It was a torture to eat, but his hunger and thirst was still satisfied.

But Seoyoon didn't stop at just feeding it to him.

Weed realized then.

‘You murderer!’

All along, listening to him obediently and acting nice must have been an act.

‘She was looking for an opportunity! She was planning to torture me like this while I didn’t have the strength to resist,’ Weed thought.

He could do nothing but to regret the situation.

In his defenceless situation, he had to endure Seoyoon’s tyranny.

The porridge she kept feeding him, spoonful after spoonful!

A great danger approached Weed.

‘Let’s just die. I just have to die. Then everything will be over.’

Weed wished he could die now. He hated suffering from fever and dizziness. If he revived as an undead, his level or skill mastery would fall, but at least he would be more comfortable.

But even if he wanted to die, he couldn’t.

‘Someone please kill me.’

Weed's cheeks were filled with food.

Seoyoon fed him 150 spoonfuls of porridge. It equaled four full bowls!

She fed him not only to be satisfied, but to the point right before he would explode from being overfed.

After eating enough, anyone wouldn't want to eat anymore, but she was feeding him more forcibly. No one would understand what a nightmare it was.

Step. Step. Step.

He heard Seoyoon walking towards Alveron.

Because of the heat, he felt dizzy, but he could hear the sounds very clearly.

Since it was the sound of the devil that was torturing him, he just couldn't help but hear it.

Weed prayed. 'Amen. Alveron, you suffer a bit too.'

Even in such a situation, another's misfortune was Weed's happiness.

Opening his eyes a bit, he watched Seoyoon feeding Alveron her porridge.

She carefully fed Avelon.

Weed shivered.

‘Really cruel. She’s a devil in human disguise.’

From the effort to not spill a drop and feed everything, Weed saw pure evil.

The way how Seoyoon moved her hand reminded Weed of the careful way of handling poison.

But, it didn’t take that long to feed Alveron.

She cooled the porridge by blowing on it when she fed Weed, but she just fed Alveron.

And there wasn’t much left either. Weed was force fed almost two-thirds of the can, so Alveron didn’t have to eat as much.

Weed thought, ‘So I was her main target. She wanted to torture me more.’

Although he ate some porridge, he still had no strength left. His

fever and dizziness became worse.

It was worse than the flu. It took away the ability to move.

If he had fallen in a place that was full of monsters, he would've died soon afterwards, but because he fell after moving into the cave, he didn't die as quickly.

He recovered some life because he ate some food, but as if to prove that the cursed cold wanted to be stubborn, it only became worse.

Due to his worsening condition, Weed closed his eyes, unable to endure anymore.

'Yeah, there's nothing more depressing than getting sick.'

When he closed his eyes and rested, sleep overcame him.

The thought that he'd die made him feel comfortable.

Since he couldn't do anything anyway, he relaxed and fell asleep.

If he wanted to, he could sleep in Royal Road.

There were many people who slept at a place with great scenery, listening to birds chirping.

Virtual reality had many uses, but it was first time Weed fell asleep.

Since he always had something to do, he thought sleep was a waste. But that is why he dreamt a dream so sweet; a dream that no one would want to wake up out of.

Someone nursed the sick Weed.

She melted snow to make water, and put a soaked cloth onto his forehead.

When Weed woke up from time to time from his fever, he could feel someone's care.

Although he almost reached the end of his life, he didn't die. Someone nursed Weed like a mother would her child.

This someone was the most beautiful but also the most evil woman. Seoyoon was looking after Weed.

*

When Yurin heard of Balon's request, she felt happy.

‘So this is the real quest!’

After building up the relationship, she got a quest.

Although the reward wasn't much, Yurin became excited at the thought of her first real quest.

“I will return this book for you.”

You have accepted the quest.

Carrying the book, she walked towards the river.

Lights are turned on brightly.

The roads were decorated with paintings and sculptures.

From a distance, a Bard can be heard singing.

Fantastic night in Rhodium. Each individual artists were flaunting their own unique talents.

The heart of the Rhodium river is extremely clean.

Many people especially lovers, were walking around at night.

‘Elderly.’

Elderly people were unexpectedly easy to find, as there were many elderly people by the river having a conversation.

‘Balon said he was someone who likes to be alone.’

Yurin found a lone elderly person. But still, there were many elderly people.

There’s only one elderly who owns the book!

If she had given it to the wrong person, she would fail the quest.

Looking carefully Yurin noticed one person. It was a man that watched the flow of the river endlessly. Boundless solitude and sadness was reflected on the old man’s grieving face.

‘That person appears to be the right one.’

Yurin walked up to the elderly person and said.

"Hello, do you by any chance know Balon?"

The man replied without looking at her.

“Balon? I don’t know such a person.”

For some reason, the man's voice faltered.

'This man isn't the right one?'

However, Yurin persisted. Because unlike other elders, the man had a heavy atmosphere surrounding him.

"Balon's restaurant minutes away from here, and is visited by many travelers, are you sure you don't know him?"

"Oh, that friend. I know he's a Chef."

"Balon asked me to return this book for him."

"Oh, it's my book. He borrowed that book, and now it's returned to me."

Yurin held the book with both hands, and gently handed it over.

"Thank you so much for returning the book. I hope Balon gets well."

Ttiring!

You have completed Chef Balon's request. The Elder has received

the book.

Please see Balon to receive compensation.

Quest Reward: Return to Balon's restaurant to receive the rewards.

Because it was a simple request, she did not receive any experience or reputation. The reward was a free meal in the restaurant.

Yurin sat beside the elderly after finishing the quest.

‘He seems desolate.’

The desolate Elder man was sitting alone in the river.

She wondered by the Elder man was staring blankly at the river.

Yurin asked cautiously.

“What are you staring at?”

“Young lady, it's been a long time since someone has shown interested in this. In the past people did not believe my story, but you brought my book so I will tell you. What do I see there? Probably a canvas.”

“Canvas?”

She glanced at the river, but could not find the canvas amongst the water.

Where is the canvas?

"Water canvas. I've had an idea to draw a picture for a long time. But then I asked myself, why should it be drawn only on a piece of paper. Pictures can be drawn anywhere such as earth and stones. If you want to use Nature as a canvas, it harmonizes with the world, that is the basic qualities of a painter."

Yurin was curious of the profession of the elderly painter.

She asked the elderly painter with a serious expression.

“Young Lady, would you also be thinking that it’s impossible to do?”

Yurin shook her head firmly.

“No. That’s not it. I also think it is possible to paint anywhere.”

“As I thought, it’s like that? It’s a rule that the true nature and harmony of paintings can newly express nature. I’ve only lived my life by clinging to paintings. The time I spent trying to draw inside

the designated margins of the paper. Young lady, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“Sure, go ahead.”

“A legend is passed down amongst us painters. It’s of great painter that painted on a flowing river.

Could you please look into this?”

“I think I’ll be able to do it.”

Yurin had no confidence.

This could be useful daily activities, but she was not sure know where to start looking.

"No, it shouldn't be so difficult. I grow old, and it has become harder for me to travel around please investigate the rumors in Rhodium Kingdom please. I don't have much but I have a little money I can give you."

Ttiring!

The favor for the Elder Painter.The rumors described the Painter

to be absurd.

For painting a Legendary picture on top of the river.

Investigate the authenticity of the rumour.

Difficulty: E

Reward: 3 Silvers

Quest Restrictions:

Delivered Balon's item, people who listened to the old painter's story.

A chain Quest!

Yurin could not ignore the reward.

‘3 Silver requires 15 hours of dish washing to earn.’

After reaching the higher levels, one could make 3 silver by killing 1 monster. But in the beginning 3 Silvers was a considerable amount of money. A small hat and a fire bolt spell book can be purchased with that amount.

“Sure I'll find out”

You have accepted the quest.

The old man nodded.

“Thank you. I must know the truth. If the rumours are true, I will not have spent my time here in vain.”

After leaving the Elder, Yurin headed straight to the painter’s guild. There should at least be some information to be found there.

‘The instructor of the Painter’s Guild would know, right?’

Thanks to having taken on several jobs finding the painters guild was not hard. But the instructors wouldn’t talk to her.

“I’m sorry, but I would rather not talk to a nameless person if i don’t have to.”

Yurin hopelessly starting talking to different members of the Painter’s Guild. However, the only conversational partner she had was the gatekeeper.

The gatekeeper listened to Yurin’s requests and, after a long time of consideration, he carefully spoke.

“There’s a rumor I heard not too long ago. It was long time ago, and I do not remember it well. If you seek the whole truth then

you must find grandmother Bellopaix. Since she is a famous painter she should be able to clear all doubts.”

“Where does grandmother Bellopaix live?”

“The Kiam family mansion. You will be able to meet her if you go there.”

“Thank you.”

Yurin looked for the Kiam family’s mansion. The dignified mansions were all gathered behind Rhodium.

Yurin was also denied access to the inside of the mansion at this place. The reason she was denied access to the mansions was because Yurin had no fame and was not acquainted with anyone.

However, Yurin did not budge and said what was on her mind.

“I came because I have to talk with grandmother Bellopaix about a painting.”

“You said a painting? Grandmother Bellopaix has always been a person who holds great affection for painters. Enter. She should be at the garden.”

The gatekeeper let Yurin pass. Because she mentioned the painting, we didn’t require any other decorum.

As grandmother Bellopaix was taking care of flowers in the garden. Yurin approached.

“Hello. This is the first we’ve met. May I ask what you know about the rumors about the painting that was painted above the river?”

“The picture above the river? Hulhul, there are even people who have heard the surfacing rumors and came to find me. When I was young, I went to see the fantastic form personally.”

“Then the truth behind the rumors of the painting...”

"Of course the rumors are true. I've seen it with my own eyes, it can't be phony. The brushstrokes of the painting are so amazing that you will never forget for a lifetime. I got into a hobby of collecting paintings from then on. Paintings of flowing water. I can't see the painting anymore, but the paintings harmony and composition were perfect. Hulhul, the paintings around Rhodium do not give the same impression. Perhaps such works will never be seen again."

Yurin wondered.

“If it is a picture, you can take it out and look at it at any time. However, since it was a short-lived piece of art, maybe it was too much to give it such high praise?”

“Lady who is still young, the strength of time is tremendous. If a person has no happy memories, then their past and future prospects look bleak. The painting was significant to me for a long period of time that I've lived and it will be forever embedded in my memory.”

Ttring!

Completed Quest of the old painterRumors about painter that painted on the river were proved true. The painting currently does not exist, but is still praised as one of the best paintings ever.

Quest Reward: Please receive it from the elderly painter.

You have leveled up.

The quest was successfully completed.

Thanks to the experience from the quest, she was able to level up.

‘Wow, the second stage of the chain quest is complete.’

At that moment, Yurin released all her tension. As soon as grandmother Bellopaix knew that she finished the quest, she spoke with a pensive face.

“It would be difficult to behold such a beautiful sight again.

Due to too many people assuming paintings can only be done on paper. Young lady. Do you think I would be able to see such a spectacle one more time before I die?”

- You are able to become the hidden profession ‘Aqualight Painter.’

If selected, the class related skills that are special that you don’t have will be usable.

Would you like to select this profession?

Yurin would have never imagined herself being a painter. However as she saw the tears in grandma Bellopaix’s pleading eyes she unconsciously nodded.

“I’ll draw that picture once again.”

Yurin was suddenly engulfed in light.

Change profession to Aqualight Painter.

- New skill: Painting

Painting: You can draw anything.

You can raise your reputation depending on the type of level of artwork you create.

- New Skill: Coloring.

Coloring : You can use color on paintings whenever it is necessary.

Your skill level rises the more you use different colors.

You can extract dyes from grass and flowers.

- New Skill: Doodling

Doodling: If doodled on the face or the body, it can weaken enemies or fear them.

At night, this effect double.

However, if you continually draw weaker monsters, it will not be as effective.

-New Skill: Quick Hand Movements

Quick Hand Movements: Able to draw moving objects using rapid hand movements.

Mana can be used to increase the speed of hand movement, and this can be used in combat.

- New Skill: Artwork Emotions

Artwork Emotions: Can be used to determine value of basic art.

- New Skill: Illustration Identification.

Illustration Identification: Can only be acquired by Aqualight Painters.

Chapter 6: A Man's Romance

Weed gently opened his eyes and saw a bonfire burning nearby.

‘Are there any survivors?’

Although he had no more strength and had little health left, he did not die.

-You have caught a coldPhysical strength has decreased by 36%

Skill effects have decreased by 40%.

With some rest, your body will stabilize and return to normal.

The vestiges of the cold still remained in the body. If you overburden yourself, the chance of the cold returning was high.

He overcame the cold that he thought he was going to perish from.

The warm heat started to fill up the cave.

‘The cold air is coming in?’

He saw the ceiling of the cave was collapsed, completely blocking

the entrance with large rocks.

“These imprints are?”

Trembling, Weed confirmed the ceiling had collapsed.

When he confirmed that the ceiling had collapsed, Weed trembled out of terror.

A strong skill had completely destroyed it.

‘She fully intended to bury me alive!’

As if force feeding him with food is not enough, she wanted to bury him alive.

Weed laid bare his chest.

“Somehow, I’m alive.”

Escaping was too difficult to do.

The entrance was completely blocked and although he used his Sculpting Skills to cut through the rocks and metals little by little, escape seemed impossible.

In the worst case scenario he could call out to Bingryong. No

matter how feeble-minded Bingryong was, these rocks could easily be cleaned up.

The area was still clogged with rocks, and was not big enough for a person to fit through, but you could breathe fresh air through it.

Suddenly, Weed had other concerns.

“Alveron! What has happened Alveron?”

Similarly, Alveron suffered from a severe cold.

Priests had various skills which provide a lot of support.

Moreover, he was a Pope Candidate for the Church of Freya. If he died there would be serious repercussions.

Not only would he fail the quest, but he would also lose his contribution points to the Church of Freya.

That would be the worst outcome.

“He absolutely cannot die!”

Weed went further into the cave to check on Alveron’s condition who was lying nearby.

“You’re alive.”

Weed examined his condition and was relieved.

Alveron who survived the cold, had a smile on his face. Despite that, it wasn’t a good enough reason to ignore his cold.

He saw an odd shape on the ground.

Weed touched it by tapping it with his foot.

“What the hell is this?”

The ground was covered with a long thick mantle. It was the mantle he had not seen in awhile, but it had something baggy in it. It was in the shape of a human.

“I don’t think it’s a monster?”

Weed was surprised to see a cloak peaking out.

Weed was surprised on what he saw after peeking under the mantle.

Seoyoon was covered in cold sweat under the mantle!

Weed speculated.

“Although she did not bury me alive, she tormented me instead.”

When he was laying down with a cold, she could have harassed him at any time.

What a wicked trick!

Alveron, who was taking care of Weed, also caught a cold, leaving all his responsibilities to Seoyoon.

She spent countless hours outside in the snowstorm to collect firewood. She thought that Weed and Alveron might die, so she made them food, but forgot to make some for herself. In the midst of things, she felt her physical body weaken.

A slight feeling of a cold.

If she went back to rest, she would not get sick enough to be incapacitated.

However, Alveron was okay up to a certain extent, but Weed was at the brink of death, so she watched him throughout the night and nursed him. She replaced the cloth on his head with a cool one, and stoked the fire.

Because she was not able to rest, Seoyoon's cold became worse and then she collapsed.

Weed thought of different situations and came up with a theory.

“I’m sure it was to harass me!”

Anyway, he was alive.

Weed took cooking tools out of his backpack. He was going to create food that will supplement his stamina.

This was a good time to cook.

Weed used Eel, Sashimi, and Goldfish to make the soup.

Bouillabaisse. (It's a name of a French Dish. [Click here for information.](#))

Eels, and several other fishes were some of the ingredients used to create this French Specialty. Eating this healthy dish is exceptional when it comes to increasing digestion.

In the proper home, one could experience the rich taste of seafood, but because they did not have the necessary equipment, the dish was incomplete.

Weed looked at the sick Alveron and Seoyoon and fed them the Bouillabaisse.

“Now I feel a little better.”

Extreme selfishness!

A man who cooks and eats his meals alone loses his appetite, and, because he becomes apathetic, it becomes harder to eat.

But you should always eat delicacies alone!

If destroying an apple tree would end the world, Weed would still eat the apples

If he had to choose between destroying the world or to plant an apple tree, Weed would immediately choose the Apple tree and eat all of its fruits by himself.

You have regained your Stamina and Health.

Bouillabaisse increases cold resistance by 15%. Weed divided the food between Alveron and himself.

“Eat this, so you can regain your health faster. Then we can resume working.”

After that was Seoyoon.

“I will definitely repay my debt.”

Revenge for being fed food that was difficult to eat.

Weed sprinkled the remaining salt, red pepper paste, and garlic into the remaining Bollabaise. But he became heartbroken when he saw Seoyoon’s face.

She caught a cold and was unconscious but even asleep her face was incredibly beautiful.

Her clear skin was completely free of blemishes.

A high nose and red lips.

Beads of sweat covered her nose and forehead.

How perfectly her neck and collarbone lined up!

No matter where, there was not a single ugly spot.

Complete harmony was achieved in her exhilarating beauty!

Charm flowed from her eyes, which were slightly open due to her dizziness.

Seoyoon held a fairy-like beauty even while sleeping.

‘I’ll endure for now. No matter how it was prepared, I lived by eating her food. And I suppose there was a reason the precious seasonings were wasted.’

He lifted Seoyoon’s upper torso and tipped spoonfuls of the Bouillabaisse into her mouth. Weed felt his heart clench while looking at the Seoyoon who was eating with her eyes closed.

‘Even though I only have to get revenge... Even though I had to eat that disgusting food...’

He ate and rested that day.

It was to recuperate his fallen Stamina, which was due to the sickness.

Weed felt refreshed after resting completely for a day. However, because Seoyoon and Alveron were still lying down due to their severe fever, Weed could not resume his activities.

‘This awful cold. It still hasn’t gone away.’

The power of the Valley of Death.

It was an even harsher place because they had to fight not only the monsters, but also the cold.

For now he would cook food little by little until his body returned to normal, and would rest while carving some sculptures.

The romantic scene of carving a sculpture of Seoyoon's sleeping form in a small cave.

‘This isn’t too bad.’

Weed was content as he was. Afterall, it was not common to be able to sneak a look at the sleeping form of a girl as beautiful as Seoyoon.

He was sleeping in the same place with a beauty, and also the happiness of feeding her three meals a day while supporting her head. Weed was enjoying the situation every man dreamt of.

After regaining her consciousness, Seoyoon tried not to eat due to her embarrassment. Her cheeks were bright and red and she was quickly blinking her eyes. She was clearly trying to oppose her caretaker, but Weed would not back down.

As much as he had been through, he did not want to seem like a pushover.

“You already ate this earlier.”

“ ... ”

Since it was already cooked, he had no choice but to give it to her!

The woman was one of the many temptations to men.

‘Only her hands are small and fine.’

It'll be a brilliant strategy to try and use its effects.

Seoyoon slightly parted her lips and ate the food that she was fed.

After feeding her a few more times, she became used to being fed.

‘Even though I fed her often yesterday.’

Weed recalled the past again.

After his parents' death, he directly raised his younger sister. While the age gap between the two siblings wasn't very wide, back then it was large.

When his younger sister was younger, the biggest problem was food. They did not have decent side dishes, and, when times got really tough, they ate rice sprinkled with salt at night.

Most families as poor as his sought aid from the government or social welfare services. They usually provided the most basic necessities to survive.

However, the government usually gave only very basic supplies, like rice.

The people who controlled the economy were pessimistic about the impoverished grandmother and the two young siblings living together with her.

That was why, in order to send them to an orphanage or to split them up through adoption, they did not provide support.

Thanks to that, they only had rice and salt to eat.

Of course, the younger sister tried not to eat.

“Eat. If you eat something, your stomach will at least be full.”

As he said this, Weed gained the responsibility of feeding her.

Weed unknowingly began to feed Seoyoon the food kindly. He also stroked her hair.

“Eat a lot.”

“...”

Seoyoon instantly became stiff!

After she ate her meal without saying anything, she laid down and slept again. Facing the wall, she had no need to say anything while her face became redder than a ripe persimmon.

Big brother, what are you doing right now?

Just then, a whisper came from his younger sister.

Weed was as surprised like a criminal getting caught red-handed. It was because of Seoyoon's presence. Although this was due to a quest, he would never be caught with a girl alone, even in his dreams.

If one meets a girl, it will take up money. Luxury and pleasure, an easy way to overspend.

‘In order to save even a bit more, you have to live as a bachelor.’

It was Weed's outlook on life. That was how much he distanced himself from women while growing up.

His younger sister was the center of Weed's life. That was how much he distanced himself from women while growing up.

Weed answered his little sister.

I'm in the middle of exploring.

Typically, people had to meet up and add each other as friends

before being able to whisper to each other. However, family members were able to immediately send and receive whispers.

Exploring? Is it related to a quest?

That's right.

What kind of quest is it?

Yurin showed a great deal of interest.

Because it had not been long since she had first started Royal Road, she was buried in quests.

Hm, It's nothing much. I'm traveling around a bit in the North.

The North? I had heard that there was barely anyone who was able to go up there, and the people here say the same thing? That it's a place that is too cold to bear. Are you okay, big brother?

Of course. If it's about this cold, I can take off my coat due to the heat. I even broke some ice and took a bath a little while ago. Ah-choo!

Big brother, didn't you sneeze just now?

No, what are you talking about! It's so hot that I'm dripping sweat from my forehead.

Weed stoked the fire and went closer and sat down while talking.

Bluffs and bravado.

Even if he was to die, he would never show weakness in front of his little sister. He wanted to leave behind the impression of a strong older brother.

I see; if you're doing a quest in the North, it must be hard.

No, something of this level is nothing. I was always doing quests of this difficulty.

Huhu. Weed laughed haughtily.

Then, what kind of quests are you doing?

I'm looking for the 'Valley of Death' in the North and investigating the treasure it holds, and I'm sowing seeds. More importantly, hasn't it been 4 weeks for you as well? Can you leave the city now?

Yeah, today marks the 4th week.

Congratulations. It looks like you can now travel the wide continent of Versailles to your heart's desire. Take care to not underestimate even a rabbit. And don't bother the wolves, because they're strong.

Thanks, big brother. I'll take care.

By the way, what's your profession?

Weed slyly planted some expectations in her.

What kind of era is the current era? Most families were usually dual income. It was a world where a family could not survive with one source of income! The truth was Weed, alone, could send his sister to university, and was earning enough to support their current lifestyle. He showed his frugal mind through making whatever he needed, and sold all of his items. In addition to the ad revenue he collected through quests and the Hall of Fame, the revenue from the gold made him rather rich.

However, if they became a dual income family, they could look forward even more money than they had.

‘I’d be glad if it wasn’t a weird profession like mine.’

His little sister answered.

-My profession! I got it from this chain quest that I obtained through a very unusual association. Can you believe that I got it through a quest the owner of the restaurant gave me after I finished washing the dishes?

I see.

Suddenly, the quest the Instructor gave him came to mind. The chain quest he obtained while he was eating the Instructor’s lunchbox.

That’s how I obtained the profession of ‘Aqualight Painter.’
Weed’s face turned grave.

Aqualight Painter?

Yeah. It’s a Hidden Profession.

...

Weed felt as though the world had collapsed.

‘It seems like our fate won’t allow us to obtain a normal profession!’

Aqualight Painter.

Just hearing the name made the jobs that could earn a fortune unobtainable.

At least with an adventurer related profession, like Grave Robber, one could obtain some items and earn some money. However, without fail, both siblings ended up with an art related profession. And, in the case of the younger sister, the title of “Legendary” was not even applied.

‘I can earn money on my own. It wasn’t like I had big expectations from the beginning. If it’s a job that she can have fun with, it’s okay.’

However, the art related professions was atypical, so his little sister could have sufficiently enjoyable travels.

More than that, I hate the cold, so I guess it would be too much for me to go there?

It will most likely be hard. If your Stamina is low, then you will immediately freeze to death.

I see.

However, don’t be disappointed. I’ll introduce you to some people who can help you.

Who are they?

The Geomchis. If it’s those people, they can probably help you a lot. The Geomchis are currently wandering around the continent,

undergoing undisciplined training. If you contact them, they'll put all other things aside and come running to help.

Those guys can probably give you some fitting basic beginner equipment. I will settle the debt afterwards, so don't worry and get what you want.

Yeah, I got it. But big brother, didn't you say that you had friends that you often went hunting with?

Are you talking about Pale-nim, Irene-nim, and Surka?

Yeah, introduce those people to me too.

Of course I'll introduce you. I'll tell them to contact you later. Although, as things are, they can't meet you since they're far away.

The distance doesn't matter... Anyway, I got it. Then, I guess I should go out of the castle. I'll whisper you later.

Alright, be careful of the rabbits.

Yeah, don't worry about me and take care of yourself.

After Weed finished talking to his younger sister, he brought some firewood to feed the campfire with, while trying to be careful so that even his footsteps did not make any noise. Even while he was cooking some food, he spent extra time to make sure that he did not make any noise. Only when he was sculpting could a small sound be heard.

In this way, while, two weeks past and Alveron's body recovered.

"Weed-nim, I am ashamed."

"Don't worry, it's okay."

“Since my Stamina has recovered somewhat, I think I can exert some divine power.”

“Oh, that’s a relief.”

Weed nodded his head.

If one had private access to healing magic, it was much easier to get rid of diseases.

“O goddess Freya, please cleanse away the pain and distress of these who follow you and depend on you. Cure Disease.”

Alveron first used a disease cure magic on Weed.

Due to holy power, the physical resistance ability toward sicknesses increases. Most sicknesses can be healed.

The cold is healed.

Physical resistance returns to normal.

Resistance against colds permanently rises by 2%

Resistance against ice magic permanently rises by 0.2%.

Along with being healed from the cold, Weed gained a bit of

permanent resistance against it.

Alveron used the same disease cure magic on Seoyoon and himself.

Since they had the cold more severely than Weed, it didn't cure them completely.

But after eating food that was good for health and resting for a day, they could move around again.

“It was the worst cold ever.”

Weed moved the boulder that was blocking the cave entrance.

Now, it was time to make the monsters of the Valley of Death taste bitterness.

*

Zephyr yawned.

“Huaam! So boring.”

“Still, you're hunting a lot.”, Hwaryeong said as she braided her hair in two plaits.

“Not like we used to. It was real fun when hunting with Weed-nim.”

“True, it was just an endless repetition of charging and charging.”

“When I think back to it, I feel as if my body is still covered with bandages.”

The death hunt they did for eight days when they were with Weed and the Geomchis! The terrifying memory of intense labour was becoming beautified as time went by.

After that, most hunting didn't feel tiring.

Looking at a mob of Skeleton Knights running toward them, Romuna snorted

“Something like this is a piece of cake.”

“I don't feel the excitement like I used to,” Surka said, as she punched Skeleton Knight's face with her cutesy fists.

The tension that makes one's spine and neck chill!

Such tension had disappeared.

Now, they chat while hunting monsters and even when monsters pop out from somewhere while they're resting, they don't get surprised.

Romuna, the magician, moves between monsters, binds them and casts magic.

Pale's arrows never miss, and he can shoot three arrows at the same time and make them hit different targets.

In Hwaryeong's case, she can now fix her make-up when fighting a monster.

Zephyr said, "Irene-nim. It's boring. Bless the monsters. I think I'm going to fall asleep from boredom."

"Yes, I will. I was going to for skill mastery. The strength that burns one's fighting will, will bring out the strength that exceeds one's limit. The whole party will strengthen."

Irene raised the monsters' strength.

She raised their ability by 20%.

Even though a priestess raises a monster's strength, no additional experience points are given, nor do any special items drop.

Just for fun.

To have more fun fighting, Irene and her party raised the monsters' ability.

Seechwi's face turned blue.

'You monsters!'

She never thought she was weaker than anyone else.

But, Skeleton Knights are monsters over level 320. They're not easy to hunt even when in a party.

They were hunting such monsters in a very dangerous way.

Seechwi became very alert.

"Unni, now."

"Yes, alright! Chichik!"

On Surka's signal, Seechi dived into the group of Skeleton Knights.

To someone with a low level like her, she could only pick up items.

Picking up items while moving between Skeleton Knights!

Because of the huge number of monsters, it wasn't very easy. And since they didn't succeed in every hunt, they had to get all the items when they were available.

Although she had Orc Commander as her job, her Charisma or Leadership stat didn't give much to benefit the party because of their large level difference.

Only to the point of raising physical damage by 3% and recovery rate by 2%!

Her ability would've had a bigger effect if she was leading orcs, but she was the only Orc in the group.

*

But who would have thought that a sister-like girl painter would want to beat cute rabbits mercilessly?

“Die, die!”

When rabbits resisted, Yurin used her feet to beat them up.

They worked for money during the day, and hunted at night.

Hunting at night was to gather more experience points.

But to Yurin who was a painter, her life and attack wasn't very strong. It was hard for her to hunt just a rabbit.

“Hunting is harder than I thought.”

After hunting a rabbit, she rested.

Before she levelled up, hunting was hard for her even when she had good equipment.

At that time, she got a whisper from Pale.

Hello. I'm Pale.

Yes. Hello.

Yurin politely greeted him. She always acted politely towards people she didn't know.

You're Weed-nim's sister, right? I'm a friend of Weed-nim who hunted with him ever since we were beginners.

Ah, the one who is skilled at shooting arrows!

Hahaha! Seems like Weed-nim already told you about me. Skilled at shooting arrows, that's an overstatement. Did he say anything else?

Yes, he told me never to tease you. That you're very timid.

Ah, is that so. I'm a bit timid. Other than that...?

I heard you sometimes play alone digging in the ground.

Kuuk!

Yurin had fun talking with Weed's friends. The polite, gentle way he talked gave her the feeling that he was a nice person.

‘Still, to hunt with Oppa, even I didn't get to do that yet.’

Out of jealousy, she played a prank that had no ill intention.

But she was smiling, enjoying it.

Anyway where are you?

Rhodium.

You're at the city of artists. We're at Yuroki Mountains.

It'll take about a week to get there.

You're coming here?

Of course. If there's anything we can help with, we will.

You don't have to. I'll go over there.

Sorry?

Could you explain the surrounding?

Yurin took out charcoal and paper and readied herself to draw.

Pale became speechless at Yurin's absurd idea.

Just how long did it take to come from Rhodium to the Yuroki

Mountains?

Plus, because monsters came in groups, it wasn't somewhere a beginner could go.

Still, Pale answered Yurin's questions.

Behind us, there are two tall trees. There's a boulder in front of us. It's a normal boulder, light grey in colour.

What's the ground around you like?

There are a lot of weeds around. There are also plenty of wildflowers, there's more on the right side. A mountain we can see far away that isn't very steep, and it has lots of trees. There's the Dark Elves' Castle after going over about two mountains.

Weather?

Clear. There are some clouds though.

Pale was confused even when he was explaining the surrounding.

"Pale, what're you doing?" Romuna asked

"I don't know. Yurin-nim is asking me to describe the surrounding, so I'm describing it for her."

"Is she that curious of this place?"

Romuna tilted her head, unable to comprehend.

Judging solely by the scenery, the place was quite extraordinary. When the sun came up in the morning and went down at night, there was nothing more beautiful.

The mood when it fogs over or rains was great. Looking at the rain forest, one can fall into one's own thought.

To those who are sensible, it was best place to spend their time.

Zephyr approached Pale.

“But what is her voice like?”

“Huh?”

“Is her voice gentle?”

Zephyr, who didn't have a girlfriend yet, was naturally curious about Yurin.

‘If she's Weed-nim's younger sister, she would have strong ability to maintain livelihood. She wouldn't starve me in any situation.’

So far, he had met various women.

Beautiful, confident women!

Still, they were busy giving their numbers when they learned of Zephyr's background. Zephyr didn't want to meet women like that again. A woman he can meet heart to heart without a care for money or status.

Like the naive heart of a man who just started dating, he wanted to make a girlfriend.

Pale looked at Zephyr as if he pitied him.

There were things that cannot be done even with a handsome face, sharp eyes, and elaborated speech.

"I'm sorry. Zephyr-nim"

"Hm?"

"To prepare for such a situation, Geomsamchi-nim told me."

Zephyr's heart became heavy.

He remembered Geomsamchi's angular face and muscles.

He was a man scarier in real life than in Royal Road. If there was an Orc in real life, the one who would be able to catch it with ease, would be Geomsamchi.

“What did he say?”

“I will relay the message as it is. If anyone dares to touch Yurin, he’ll kill him.”

"....."

“Geomshachi said more than that. He said that if a man makes Yurin cry, he’ll break his spine.”

"....."

“Geomwuchi and Geomwubakchi also said something along those lines...”

Zephyr wanted to block his ears.

“I-I can’t dare hear them.”

Pale looked at him as if he pitied him.

“It’s hard for me to say them as well. I don’t want to remember them either. So when I heard something I just added them up in numbers.”

“Numbers?”

“Death 309 times, vegetable state 68 times, at least a month stay in hospital 93 times, lower-body paralysis 30 times, deaths that I cannot describe twice. Something that’s not alive neither dead... If you still want to, I can tell you what Yurin-yang’s voice was like though.”

“Kuhuk!”

Zephyr would give up on Yurin completely.

His confidence to approach Yurin, who is like a sister to Geomchis, vaporized.

Additionally, if he thought carefully, Yurin was Weed’s sister by blood.

If he considered the continual revenge coming from Weed unlike simple, short revenges from Geomchis, she was someone he absolutely could not approach.

Based on Pale’s description, Yurin painted. Her drawing skill wasn’t very good. Rather than art or music, she was someone who only focused on studying academics. Although she didn’t have exceptional talent or sense; she tried to be as descriptive as possible.

She considered overall positions as well as the details of them.

A feminine sensibility and soft curve were drawn with warm colours.

And, she finished drawing just like how Pale described.

Yurin stretched out her arms over her painting.

“Picture teleportation!”

The special skill of an Aqualight Painter.

The scenery on paper started to wave.

Skill: You have used Picture Teleportation.

Maximum mana is halved for four days.

A fantastic skill that allows one to teleport to anywhere on the continent as long as one can know the exact geography.

On the painting, Yurin drew herself.

When she drew herself, her physical body was mystically disappearing from the plains of Rhodium. Legs, body, and finally head.

If Yurin closed her eyes for a bit and opened them again, she

would meet Pale, Irene, Romuna, and Hwaryeong.

They were surprised to see Yurin, who appeared suddenly.

To Zephyr or Seechwi, she seemed to pop out from the earth.

It was special skill that only Aqualight Painters could use.

*

Weed decided to thoroughly understand the surroundings of the Valley of Death first.

“I can’t solve the quest directly.”

He had high hopes because he had Seoyoon and Alveron with him. But unfortunately, there were problems to solving the quest speedily.

Strong Ice Trolls were part of the reason, but the climate and geography were bad as well.

“At the least, I should grasp the geography.”

Enduring the cold, Weed flew to above the Valley of Death riding on Bingryong.

He could see the whole Valley of Death after flying high up into the sky.

Snow and ice covered it until it met the horizon.

Mountain, river, frozen cities and towns.

They were part of special scenery that can be only seen in the sky of the Northern Province.

There were lots of undiscovered places in the Northern Province.

The quests that can be gained by going to such towns and castles were like heaven to adventurers.

“If they can endure this cold air.”

Weed wrapped his body in his cape as much as he could.

Although he ordered Bingryong to fly slowly, the wind was far too fierce.

If he didn't want to catch a cold again, he had to end his surveying of the area as soon as possible

Weed focused on the Valley of Death. In the middle of the mountains, the place that looked like a pair of long snakes

stretched on the ground was the Valley of Death.

On the mountain tops, there were countless monsters like Ice Trolls, stationed like soldiers defending a castle.

Only when he beats them, can he complete the quest.

“The dead end of the valley is where snakes’ heads meet.”

Although he was estimating with his eyes, the length was only about a kilometre.

The valley itself wasn’t very big. And when they would pass about one-third of the valley, he could see frozen soldiers and knights waiting there.

“They’re Nifleheim soldiers.”

Around the soldiers’ feet, there were lots of rusted weapons.

Whiiiing!

Anymore surveying would be dangerous.

His condition was about to get worse, as small ice particles started to blow with the icy wind. “Anyway I can understand the situation.”

Weed stopped surveying.

He found a larger cave around a nearby hill where the Wyverns could stay.

Until they conquered the Valley of Death, the place would be their base.

The chill would even freeze their skin!

They didn't know when snow would come and the hardened earth limited their movement.

On top of all that, monsters become stronger at night. Wyverns and Bingryong are classified as monsters, so they become stronger at night as well.

But, while the cold doesn't concern Bingryong whose body is made of ice, the Wyverns cannot fight.

Weed shook his head.

"It's not an easy quest."

He somewhat understood how to deal with an Ice Troll or Lamia.

Using Bingryong and the Wyverns, they were hunting Ice Trolls little by little.

But since they had to stop at night, they were giving Ice Trolls time to recover in the end. They are monsters that gather again like ants after a day. They had idiotically strong life stats, and their reproduction rate was exceptional as well.

So, at night only Bingryong and Weed fought, while Seoyoon, Alveron, and the Wyverns rested in the cave.

Seoyoon always logged out from Royal Road at night to get some rest.

When that happened, neither Alveron, Weed, nor the Wyverns had anything in the cave.

“Alveron.”

“Yes?”

“Look after the fire.”

“Understood.”

Alveron put in sufficient amount of firewood to keep fire from going off.

The Wyverns cuddled up near the fire with their wings folded.

“Too cold.”

“I thought I was going to freeze to death when I fought during the day.”

The Wyverns talked about their sympathetic situation and warmed their bodies near the fire.

“Kururarara!”

From time to time, they heard Bingryong’s roar from outside the cave.

‘Since he’s strong against cold and has strong life, he should be fine.’

Weed didn’t worry about Bingryong at all.

In truth, Bingryong was very timid, and cowardly.

Although he had a big body with dignity, in reality, he ran away when only a bit of life dropped or when he felt a bit of danger.

Therefore, he almost never got into dangerous situations.

When his Health dropped to only 20% of his maximum life, Bingryong drew near Alveron and goofed off.

Weed analysed the situation critically. 'If we continue like this, it's impossible to beat the quest.'

Even if they reduced the number of Ice Trolls during the day, their number just increased again at night.

There were numerous monsters in the valley. If they struggled against only Ice Trolls, it was impossible to complete the quest.

It was a great place to hunt and raise his servants, but he couldn't stay there forever.

'Anyway, we have to do something about this cold! If we do, then I might be closer to an answer than I think.'

Ice Trolls, Lamia and other monsters couldn't show their full ability due to the cold.

Weed used all the wolf leather he had to make patched up cloth and ate properly.

Fish stir-fried in sweet wine... But the cold was too severe to use food as a distraction to forget the discomfort.

Sewing and cooking had limits.

Weed held up his sculpting knife.

Chapter 7: Moonlight Magnum Opus

“Finally, it’s time to start sculpting.”

The material for sculpting was a big boulder inside the cave.

After his sculpting mastery rose quite a bit, normal materials didn’t raise the fame stat that much.

Although he could have used ice instead, there were limits, and it wasn’t so good for expressing details, so he chose to work on a boulder instead.

Weed stood, staring at the boulder.

“What should I make?”

In the past, he wouldn’t have hesitate.

Fire!

Fire!

Or something warm.

It’s always the most effective to make something simple and

straightforward.

It was easier on the mind when not considering the added benefits that were desired from the finished product and just focusing on the sculpture. But as his experiences built up, the eye for making sculptures became different.

“A sculpture doesn’t exist by itself. It’s more important to consider the situation.”

Even if he sculpts a campfire, it will only give a small warmth factor.

Sculpting is not that simple.

It is made to reflect genuine passion and the spirit of art!

Weed realized how his skill wasn’t on par with a master artisan.

But at the least he now knows the most important element of making a sculpture.

“The sculpture is as good as dead if it doesn’t contain emotion.”

He sculpted for his grandmother once in real life, in front of her who had aged with him for his entire life.

Of course, his sculpting skill was pathetic.

Even if he sculpted hundreds or thousands of times in virtual reality, it's different in reality.

Considering how he was experimenting with sculpting, where the small touch from his fingertip made a huge difference in the sculpture itself, it was a very risky thing.

The sculpture he completed had many flaws.

When looked at closely, it had many places that weren't properly finished and had scars because he put too much strength when carving.

Critical flaws to sculptures!

Still, it moved people's hearts.

Because the sculpture had his grandmother's life stored inside.

To someone who didn't know, they would only think of it as a sculpture of a grandmother.

But to an elderly woman who had gone through various difficulties throughout her entire life, it would feel differently.

A face that became so familiar to the point that it almost came alive.

As he completed the sculpture, the face that had the trace of life melted in and gave the elderly expression various feelings.

Even if it was a famous artisan's sculpture, it wouldn't move people if it was only made with skill and without purpose.

In sculpting, time and life had to be invested into it.

Therefore, it was critical to match the sculpture to his situation.

‘Definitely, I can’t ignore the setting. I need to put in as much of my life as I can into it. I need a sculpture that honestly expresses the situation I am in.’

Then Weed thought of an idea.

A man and a woman were left in the cold, earth-freezing North.

A couple pained by extreme coldness.

Nature was nothing but cruel.

A blizzard came every day and hungry wolves cried.

Aohhhhhh!

“Come this way.”

The man had the duty to protect the woman.

After going through many difficulties, they found a safe cave and took refuge inside, away from the vicious wolves. However, even if they managed to escape from dangerous enemies, hunger and cold still followed them.

The woman with bottomless beauty and immense kindness, the only one of her sort in the whole world, said to the man.

“I’m cold.”

The man could do nothing but watch her with sad eyes.

Because he was useless, he couldn’t protect the woman he loved.

Their lives stood on the verge of death.

If only I could sacrifice my life to save this woman!

The man would definitely have done it if it would save her life.

But the reality was that it would not change the situation, and

the woman knew.

The woman did not blame the man.

“Still, thank you.”

“For what?”

“For staying with me until the end. And I love you.”

To the man who had a soft and gentle heart, her words where the best gift possible.

Wharak!

The man folded his arms around the woman.

“I love you too.”

No matter how cold the sky and earth was, it couldn't freeze the hearts of this couple. They could feel a thread of warmth as they hugged each other.

“Yeah, this kind of concept would be the best.”

Weed took out his sculpting knife and approached the boulder.

Seeuk.

Rock powders fell.

Cutting the edge of the boulder, he slowly gave it shape.

Accenting the feeling of the couple who worry about and care for each another, he sculpted.

Of course, the story had different facts from the real situation.

It's true that Weed and Seoyoon came to the North. But they were never separated and alone by themselves. Alveron was there, as well as the Wyverns and Bingryong.

“Can't you fight well! You powerless, useless things!”

Weed harassed Bingryong and the Wyverns, and even forced the holy priest Alveron to work. But he hid all those truths.

And, the truth didn't end with just that. The powerless woman who stirs up the instinct to protect and the woman Seoyoon were far different from each other!

The strong female warrior who can slay just about any monster, Seoyoon.

The appearance of hungry wolves was true at least, but the reason why they cried was different.

They were crying, pleading for mercy, merely tasty food that got slaughtered for food as soon as they were seen.

Even when they came to such place, Weed adapted instead of starving to death.

“Well, art needs some ignorance of reality from time to time.”

Even if it's a hero who saved a country from danger, he will have to go to the restroom too.

One can sculpt about how he led a war to victory, but one can't really draw or sculpt such a scene.

Whenever Weed moved the sculpting knife, rock slithers were sliced away.

The basic form took place.

Then, Seoyoon logged in and it became morning.

Depending whether it was night or day, battles happened periodically, so Seoyoon logged in when there would be hunting.

As the sun rose and bright light filtered in from the outside of the cave, the temperature rose a bit over night.

“Then, let’s go hunting.”

With the Wyverns, Weed headed to the Valley of Death.

Hunting when the sun’s up, sculpting when the sun’s down.

Like that, the sculpture started to take form after several days.

A man and a woman were hugging each other with the expression that they were about to cry out in inexplicable sorrow.

But Weed felt it was incomplete.

“It’s not enough with only hugging each other.”

Although the couple was so close to each other, there wasn’t much feeling coming from the scene.

They were just a couple that had great sadness and pain.

Weed carefully thought what was missing.

“What would I feel if I was the man?” he asked himself.

He would be desperate and feel powerless.

Looking at the lover who was slowly dying, trying to warm her up, the man would feel very sad.

The fact that he himself could not endure any more, and that he would have to say farewell to his lover, his heart would be heavy with sadness.

Farewell and death.

He lost family members before, so he knew how much sadness it brought.

Weed decided.

“This is failed product.”

Although he worked very hard for several days, he decisively abandoned it.

When knowing that it would be a failure, he couldn't continue to make it.

Weed started sculpting a different boulder.

This time, the couple was hugging each other again.

As if he was trying to waste his time, there was not much difference from the other one.

Even if he makes a similar sculpture, Weed's sculpting skill wasn't as pathetic as before, so it would raise the mastery of it a bit.

If there were any difference, the man and the woman were smiling now.

The most loving smiles they could show to one another.

“If you're about to leave this world, you should smile. That's the last thing you can show to the person you love.”

Weed's parents passed away when he was small.

He saw his parents for the last time when they were going into the surgery room in the hospital.

At that time, Weed cried and cried.

He cried because it was heartbreaking.

But, no one would know how much he regretted it afterwards.

“I should’ve smiled. I should’ve shown them the best smile.”

He should’ve smiled. Shown that it’s alright, and that he would live happily with his sister and grandmother.

Not being able to do it always remained as one of his regrets.

“Yes, a smile is the best.”

Weed made the sculptures have the happiest smile toward each other.

A smile with abundant love and trust.

Still, it had a somewhat sad and ominous mood.

With their two arms, they embraced each other as much as possible, to share a little of their warm between each other, and to never separate from each other.

Please name the Sculpture

Weed said as he pointed the sculpting knife.

“Warm Lovers.”

He decided on the name simply because they were hugging each other in a cold place.

But it came out to be a good one, going mysteriously well with the mood of the sculpture.

Would you like to name the sculpture Warm Lovers?

“Yes.”

In truth, he had some guilt as he named the sculpture.

Because of the man and woman’s faces.

He didn’t realize it in the beginning, but the man resembled himself a lot.

Because he became emotional and sculpted as he thought back to his regret, he unconsciously carved his own face.

Because he went through so much hardship, he couldn’t smile purely.

It was not a rotten smile, but a reliable and bright smile that he only showed to his family.

If it was only the man that resembled Weed, there would be no problem.

But the problem was the woman's face resembled Seoyoon so much so that it was as if he brought Seoyoon's face and placed it there.

Seoyoon's beauty was such that it would be no exaggeration to say her beauty was absolute.

To the point where one's own taste or preference wouldn't matter, Seoyoon was beautiful.

After sculpting her several times, to the point where he would be able to sculpt her with his eyes closed, he naturally sculpted her.

‘How troublesome.’

It would be problematic to deal with afterwards, but Weed decided to leave it for now.

No matter what, Weed liked the finished sculpture.

It's not like he can edit a sculpture that is this complete.

Because the woman's or rather Seoyoon's face was turned toward the cave wall, it wouldn't be easy to look at unless one purposefully put an effort into it.

Ding!

Moonlight Magnum Opus.

You have completed the Warm Lovers!The warm lovers from the place where even breath would freeze. The work expresses the lovers' passionate love that even death cannot separate.Due to its impressive expressiveness, the work deserves to be displayed even in a king's personal museum or in a palace.

This great work will have more value as time goes by.

The creative and highly artistic sculptor has learned and recovered the forgotten skill, Moonlight Sculpting.

This work will leave its name in the continent's history of sculpting.

Artistic value:

Exceptional sculptor Weed's work.

2,600.

Special options:

Those who have seen Warm Lovers will have 20% increase in Health and Mana regeneration rate for a day.

Resistance to cold increased by 40%.

Maximum Health increased by 25%.

All stats have a 20 point increase.

- The sculpture fumes out hot air that would make one burn oneself when touching the sculpture.

- Party experience gain increased by 6%.

- When lovers hug one another in front of the sculpture, they can receive the blessing of Warm Lovers.

- Does not stack with other sculptures' effect.

- The number of Moonlight Magna Opera completed: 1

- Advance Sculpting skill level rises to 2. Sculpting becomes surprisingly detailed and delicate.

- Dexterity skill mastery rises.

- Sculpture Understanding skill level rises by 1.

- Fame rises by 460.

- Art stat rises by 30

- Charm rises by 7.

- Warm Lovers was recorded in the history of sculpting.

- When talented sculptors look at this sculpture, it will help them improve their sculpting.

- For making a Moonlight Magnum Opus, all stats additionally rise by 4.

Like always, Seoyoon logged in when night was about to end.

Unless there were dishes to clean after eating or leather to sort that was stacked up to be done from hunting, she logged in on time.

She didn't log in much in the past.

But after coming with Weed to the North, she was never late.

A place where freezing air flowed about.

But today, warm wind came from deep inside the cave.

".....?"

After looking around, Seoyoon found a sculpture that wasn't there before.

There was a man who was dressed lightly.

There was a woman who was wearing short sleeved clothes, unfitting to the climate here.

‘Such a great sculpture.’

From where Seoyoon was, she could see the back of the woman sculpture and the man’s face.

The man’s face resembled Weed quite a lot.

‘How can he smile like that?’

Seoyoon tilted her head.

Although the sculpture had thin clothes on, they had smiles that warmed the heart.

The warm wind came from the sculpture.

"....."

Seoyoon kept on looking at the sculpture.

‘Such a well-made sculpture.’

The expression and detail made it hard to believe it was made of rock.

The sculpture that emitted gentle light was very beautiful.

Although their faces were smiling, they were trying hard to embrace each other a bit more in such harsh conditions.

It was a sculpture that filled the heart with affection.

‘Only a person with a warm heart would be able to make such sculpture.’

With gentle eyes, Seoyoon looked at Weed who was sleeping near the sculpture.

He was a person with various talents. He cooked well and could survive well. A cheapskate who tried very hard to get even a penny more.

Still, he had one thing that not many people had. A warm heart.

She thought he was a good person.

Then Weed suddenly sprung up from his sleep.

“I guess I fell asleep after working so hard. She wouldn’t be here yet right? Gasp!”

When he looked up and found Seoyoon, his face became as pale

as a sheet, as if he had seen a ghost.

He shivered as well.

“W-When did you...”

Weed’s fear did not cease.

If she saw the face on the sculpture, she wouldn’t let him go easily!

But Seoyoon stood there expressionless. She thought Weed was a great person, but she didn’t show her feelings.

‘I cannot be loved by anyone.’

Seoyoon always felt pain in her heart.

For years, she lived not talking to anyone.

She wanted to talk, have a conversation. But fear always came first.

The fear of not knowing when she’ll be scarred and that she will never be loved.

She was used to not expressing her emotion.

If she hid herself from everyone, the pain would be less.

Still, she spent a considerable amount of time with Weed.

The happy Morata town's festival.

The time in the cave.

At least Seoyoon wasn't uncomfortable hanging around Weed.

Still, she didn't express herself.

She had to hide herself especially more because he was one of the few whom she knew.

'Phew, she didn't see yet.'

Looking at Seoyoon's reaction, Weed could only guess she hadn't seen the woman's face yet.

"So," he said hurriedly. "Let's go hunt!"

Since Seoyoon didn't have reason to refuse, they headed outside the cave.

Before going out, Seoyoon turned around.

She wanted to hold the sculpture in her eyes once more.

The face of Weed holding the woman, smiling so brightly.

Chapter 8: Korea University

Hayan went into the Kumdo dojang.

Inside the dojang, there were hundreds of trainees swinging swords. Men who seriously focused on swinging wooden swords while proudly wearing the dojang uniform.

She came during afternoon, while it was sword skill training time.

Usually, they would show a casual side of themselves, but when holding a wooden sword, they would become as serious as if they had met a life threatening enemy. They were people who dedicated their lives to the sword.

Choe Jongbeom who was teaching trainees saw Hayan and approached.

“Come on in. But your brother already left, after finishing his morning training.”

“I’m not here to meet my brother.”

“Then why?”

“I have something to discuss.”

“Really? I’ll listen. Wait in the lounge. I’ll go as soon as their training ends.”

“Sure.”

Hayan headed to the lounge where guests could wait. Immediately after, Jeong Ilhun, who only has his strength to trust, dropped his wooden sword.

“Master.”

“What?”

“I don’t feel good today so...”

"....."

“Can I rest in the lounge for a bit?”

As if he’s dizzy, Jeong Ilhun held his forehead.

It had never happened before. Then, other trainees started to speak up.

“Ah, nowadays I feel like crying just from watching a leaf fall.”

“Since even a gust of wind can shake this body, the sword cannot find its path. Master, can’t we rest for a bit?”

“I think I now understand what the sword is trying to tell me. In order to listen to its story, I want to rest my head inside the lounge for a bit.”

“Actually my body’s a bit weak...”

Their eyes burned with passion!

The trainees made excuses, wanting to get to the lounge no matter how!

Hayan would be surrounded by 500 males in a moment.

In the end, Choe Jongbeom personally brought Hayan to the instructor’s room.

Jeong Illhun prepared tea for her.

“Here.”

“Thank you.”

In the instructor’s room, other than Hayan and Jeong Illhun, three other instructors and 20 trainees have gathered.

Because the trainees liked Hayan like their own little sister, they didn't want to be left out.

Hayan finished the tea.

“The tea’s very tasty.”

“A former student of mine sent me this. Before that, you had something to say?”

“Yes.”

“Could it be about Lee Hyun?”

Jeong Ilhun asked sharply.

Ahn Hyun-do was thinking of taking Lee Hyun in as a disciple.

Then, next after Jeong Ilhun, Lee Hyun would become the youngest disciple.

But, since it would mean they would become like family, he was sensitive towards it.

Hayan nodded.

“That’s right.”

“What happened?”

“It’s because of brother’s birthday.”

“Birthday?”

“Yes. Brother’s birthday is only a month away. I want to hold a birthday party for him.”

""

Hayan was planning her brother’s birthday party and came to the dojang to get assistance.

Lee Hyun never cared for his birthday before. With their difficult life, remembering his birthday itself was a luxury. But his sister and grandmother never forgot his birthday and even prepared a small gift.

This time, Hayan wanted to prepare a surprise birthday party for Lee Hyun.

Jeong Ilhun, Choe Jongbeom and Ma Sangbeom’s eyes became huge.

“Birthday party? Like the ones on television?”

“Don’t you just celebrate your birthday by eating Seeweed soup?”

“After I became eight, I never did anything special on my birthday.”

“Birthday is, when the insurance company makes a thank you call....”

Those who dedicated their life to the sword!

They almost never have spent their birthday in a proper manner.

Even Jeong Ilhun, who looks after members as the eldest, was being pessimistic as well.

“Celebrating birthdays doesn’t suit us.”

Choe Jongbeom agreed.

“True. Rather than a birthday, victory in a sword skill competition is a better reason to celebrate.”

Ma Sangbeom nodded.

“Winning a competition is more important than one’s birthday.

Since you can show off the sword skills you trained by yourself to the whole world.”

Everyone spoke their opposition.

Although Hayan, whom they liked like their own sister, was making the request, celebrating an occasion like that didn't fit them.

It was an example as for why they weren't popular with girls.

Like this, it seemed the birthday party plan would end as nothing.

But after Hayan's next sentence, everything changed.

“I will introduce you to my Unni's when I get into college.”

“A F-Female college student?”

“Yes. I'll introduce pretty Unni's. How about a blind date?”

“Blind date. The ones you can see in a drama?”

Jeong Ilhun gritted his teeth. Then, he looked around his companions.

Choe Jongbeom firmly nodded his approval.

“Instructors, let’s throw a birthday party! Can’t we do at least that much for Lee Hyun?”

Lee Indo moved his butt as if he was about to get up in excitement.

“Of course. Since it’s his first birthday party, shouldn’t we do it properly?”

Enthusiastic agreement from the instructors. And there’s nothing to be said about the trainees.

“To think I’d have a blind date with a college student during my life.”

“I don’t even need for it to go well. If I can just date for a day like others...”

The trainees were struggling with loneliness.

Since they trained in sword fighting, apart from their passion, they lived a life far from women.

Even sharing a word with girls was awkward and uncomfortable.

Rather, fighting yakuza was much more comfortable.

Others may be used to dating a girl and separating, but to them, those were moments that will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

Hayan promised.

“If you help me with the birthday party, I will set up a group blind date.”

“Ohhhhh!”

Trainees cheered. Then they started to plan for Lee Hyun’s birthday party one month later.

Absolutely in their own style!

*

“Welcome.”

“We welcome all newcomers.”

In front of the front gate of Korea University, there were clubs that were trying to have newcomers join them.

With his head lowered, Lee Hyun quietly headed towards the front door.

‘No time for things like clubs. The time I use for school life is a waste in itself.’

After going to school, the time he can invest in Royal Road decreases accordingly.

So, even if he’s a college student now, he can’t do club activities like others.

The job of sculptor showed many good points as time went by, but it needed more time investment.

Lee Hyun was set on never joining a club, even if he goes to a university.

Tadadadak.

With his heart set, Lee Hyun quickly walked by.

But no one stopped him.

Most newcomers got caught by the seniors, but no one approached Lee Hyun.

‘Phew! Thank god.’

Lee Hyun walked towards the main build, where a briefing for newcomers was to be held.

There he overheard a conversation.

“Unni, should we catch that person?”

“Leave him. Can’t you tell from his face? He’s probably a reject.”

*

At Korea University a briefing session for newcomers was held to explain the basics before entering the university.

Since it was still two months away most newbies did not attend.

But Lee Hyun took his time to come here.

‘I need to tell Haya about this.’

Like parents worrying about their child’s education, it was purely for his sister.

The briefing took place in something like an auditorium.

A bit countryish style man seated himself next to Lee Hyun.

He talked to him first.

“Nice to meet you. Are you a newcomer?”

Lee Hyun nodded and turned to face him.

“Yes.”

“Korea University is so nice. I came from the countryside to visit the school. I’m Bak SoonJo from virtual reality major.”

“Is that so. My name is Lee Hyun. I choose virtual reality major as well. Since we’re in same major, let’s speak casually to each other.”

“Is that ok? You seem older than me.”

Bak SoonJo carefully asked Lee Hyun.

Lee Hyun shook his head.

“No way. I’m 20 too.”

“Your face doesn’t look like....”

“Hmm Hmm!”

Lee Hyun cleared his throat to show that he was uncomfortable.

Thanks to it, he could move on without much trouble.

“Yes, well. Lee Hyun! Let’s get along.”

Bak SoonJo lightly beat Lee Hyun’s shoulder as he said that.

Almost at the same time, people started approaching Bak SoonJo and Lee Hyun.

“I’m also virtual reality major. My name is Lee Yu Jeong. Nice to meet you.”

“Me too. I’m Min Sura.”

“I’m Choi Sang Jun. Nice to meet you.”

Lee Hyun and Bak SoonJo shared light greetings with friends of the same major.

Afterwards they listened to the briefing together.

On the first day, after attending the briefing session, they formed a “family”.

During the briefing’s break time, there was a hot debate among the friends.

“The virtual reality motion system used in Royal Road allows different level of physical movement depending on the user’s level.”

“Not only the basic five senses, but to be able to use potential above it. It must’ve used studies on brains as research basis.”

“To save such an enormous amount of data...”

Lee Hyun didn’t get involved in their conversation.

‘It’s a simple problem if you look at it.’

Before he started Royal Road, he read various research papers about virtual reality.

There were many words he didn’t know, but he memorized everything in its entirety.

As such, Lee Hyun’s knowledge about virtual reality was over normal students.

When Royal Road was first made consideration for safety was very high.

Lee Hyun was very considerate on this point as well.

It's fine for something to go wrong with him, but his family would have a hard time.

Therefore, he studied about virtual reality.

“But Sura, what job do you have?”

“Me? I'm an enchanter. I'm in charge of wind and electricity.”

“Whoa! That's a rare job.”

Enchanter is a job that gives strength to an object or a lifeform.

It's basic is similar to a priest's blessing magic, but it's better in a sense because the given strength doesn't disappear afterwards.

Mostly, it was job that takes necklaces, earrings, rings, etc and uses magic on them.

Even if it's hard to raise the level in the beginning, it's a job that brings in lots of money when successful.

“What about you?”

“I’m just a normal warrior. Level is 216.”

“That’s not normal at all. The level’s really high. I’m still only 140.”

“It can’t be helped since enchanter isn’t really a job for battling . But let’s go hunting together later on.”

“Yes. OK.”

After the girls revealed their level and jobs, boys started to reveal theirs as well.

Choi Sang Joon spoke first.

“I’m a warrior too. Thanks to hunting with a guild, I’m 278.”

“Which guild?”

“Black Lion.”

“Wow! The most famous guild in Thor Kingdom!”

Lee Yu Jeong didn't hide her surprise.

It was very difficult to join a huge famous guild.

Your activities are limited while in a guild, but everyone still wanted to join a good guild.

It's because of the benefits. Such as entering a guild war to take over a castle or hunting ground and the chance to borrow items easily.

Especially being able to borrow good items was a great advantage.

Not only that, if their activity is beneficial, they can receive some gold for monthly payment.

But even if there weren't such benefits, famous guilds had their own pride.

When going to a field, city, or a castle, everyone will recognize their guild mark.

They get respected and commented by people and they can even get good amounts of giveaway items.

Sometimes, even if someone does a great thing, they may not even get a comment.

The Versailles continent is a world where strength rules and the famous guilds were the source of it's strength.

“It’s nothing. My brother is Black Lion guild’s founding member. He was one of the first 30 members, so I could join.”

“Then your brother’s level must be insane.”

Lee Yu Jeong looked at him as if she was jealous of him.

Choi Sang Joon nodded.

“He doesn’t tell me his level, but he should be at least over 340. I was able to raise my level easily following my brother around.”

“Whoa, really?”

While girls were jealous of him, Lee Hyun thought otherwise.

‘He trained his character like all the others. It’ll only get harder once he gets further along.’

In Royal Road the skill level was very important.

If he just gathers up exp fast and levels up, he’ll only go through hardships later.

Especially if he raised his level tagging behind someone else, then he'll be barely able to do his share of work if a really dangerous hunt began.

Min Sura and Lee Yu Jeong approached Lee Hyun and Bak SoonJo who hadn't revealed their job yet.

"Soon-jo what's your job?"

When Min Sura asked blinking her eyes, Bak SoonJo answered, scratching his head.

"Me? Level 342 and the job is thief."

"....."

The level of Bak SoonJo who had a naive appearance caused great ripples.

Royal Road couldn't be understood from it's cover.

It depends on how many monsters you've slayed and how much time one spends in a dungeon.

Although Bak SoonJo looked like the quiet type, because he had competitive nature, he caught monsters while almost living in a dungeon.

Lastly, Min Sura looked at Lee Hyun.

“Lee Hyun, what’s your job and level?”

He didn’t really want to hide it.

But he didn’t want to show off either.

To those who simply enjoy virtual reality, level may be something to show off, but to dark gamers, it was just exposing their cards.

‘They wouldn’t ask in detail anyway.’

Looking at the experience until now, they probably wouldn’t.

Expecting what would happen, Lee Hyun slowly opened his mouth.

“Sculptor.”

“Hm?”

“My job is sculptor.”

“Oh my.”

It was only a split of a second for people’s eyes to be full of pity.

Choi SangJoon beat Lee Hyun’s shoulder in encouragement.

“Try hard. I heard people choose sculptor a lot nowadays.”

“Yeah.”

Chatting from time to time like this, they listened to the briefing.

Lee Hyun wrote down important details in a notebook he prepared separately.

They were mostly subjects that would be helpful to study before school life, information about studying abroad and financial aid.

He parted with studying after dropping out of high school.

Although he passed the GED test, it’s impossible to get financial aid in the middle of university life.

Still, he wrote them down just in case.

When the briefing session ended, the friends stood up.

*

“Ah, it’s over. I’m hungry.”

“Let’s go eat something.”

“Yeah. Let’s eat at the school cafeteria.”

Lee Hyun followed his friends.

‘It wouldn’t be so bad to experience what the school cafeteria is like.’

The cafeteria was within the campus.

Korean and Western style food came out depending on the days of the week.

The girls chose Korean and the boys chose Western style.

“Looks delicious.”

“Let’s eat.”

In case of Korean style, there was rice, soup, and about five types

of Banchan.

In case of Western style, there was fried pork or fish with salad and noodles.

Min Sura smiled after trying rice and Banchan.

“Good enough.”

Choi SangJoon and Bak SoonJo sliced fried pork and put it in their mouth to savor the taste.

“School lunch isn’t bad at all.”

“It’ll be fun to go to school.”

When everyone was enjoying it, Lee Hyun alone ate with his expression wrinkled.

‘Food materials are terrible.’

It may be obvious, but the fried pork wasn’t made there.

Frozen product!

Additionally, because it’s been long since it has been cooked, the freshness was very low.

‘If it’ll be like this, it’s better to bring lunch.’

The price was 2500 won, it wasn’t very cheap. [\$2.5]

It’ll be much healthier to make lunch with freshly bought ingredients from the street market and bring it with you.

Lee Hyun finished lunch thinking of packing the best lunch.

At that moment, bulky men gathered in the student cafeteria.

They were martial art major students.

The man with great built and sweat came to eat and found Lee Hyun.

Then they bowed.

“We greet hyung-nim!”

When a student in the front bowed, other tens of students bowed as well.

“We greet hyung-nim!”

Lee Hyung sat still with an expressionless face.

He turned his face the other way as well.

He was using the ignoring-by-doing-other-stuff skill learned from Seoyoon.

But the martial art major students did not leave and stayed bowed.

Friends next to him were surprised and sat with their mouth dropped open.

A fly could've flew into Choi SangJoon's mouth.

Since martial art major students with healthy body build bowed, they could do nothing else but become confused and surprised.

And although it seemed like Lee Hyun didn't like it, he was taking their bow very naturally.

The four people there were so surprised, they took turns to look at Lee Hyun and then at the martial art students.

Lee Hyun responded to the bow as he sighed.

Lee Hyun and his friends relationship changed. Since an

upperclassman bowed to him, he had to be the same age or older. Not 20 like he had claimed.

Finally the martial art students walked away from Lee Hyun.

“SangChual Hyung, who is he? Just who was he, for you to bow like that?”

Truthfully, most of the students bowed without knowing why. Since their senior Han SangChual suddenly bowed, they bowed along with him.

Han SangChual had sweat running down his forehead.

“I told you before.”

“Huh?”

“I told you which dojang I go to right?”

“Yes. Don’t you go to that one?”

The one they were talking about was the dojang where Ahn Hyun Do was working as the master.

The famous dojang that produced world swordfight competition winners.

It was a place where monsters that had nothing to be afraid of with a sword gathered. Not counting the official trainees, just the beginner trainees numbered over 5000.

Han SangChual was one of the beginner trainees.

“He is the place’s trainee, no, he’s master’s official best disciple.”

“Gasp! The best disciple?”

“Probably. Almost sure. Mostly the instructors teach him, but sometimes he fights against the master, so it should be.”

“But he looks younger or similar to our age, there shouldn’t be any need to be as formal as you were, is there?”

The students tilted their heads.

Those who train the martial art have a very strong sense of pride.

Even if someone was higher in status in a dojang, there was no need to bow one’s head to him.

Han SangChual shook as if he felt a sudden chill.

“You should’ve seen it. You think I treated him like this from the

beginning? In the beginning I didn't admit his strength. Just one year. It felt very unfair for a person who only learned sword for a year to become master's best disciple. Even I, who went to Kumdo dojang for over 3 years, couldn't become an official trainee. I thought he was an arrogant bastard."

"Then shouldn't you have beat him up to put some sense into him?"

"I was going to! Seeing how a newcomer was pushing aside all original trainees. But I saw him fighting with a wooden sword."

"Just what was it like...."

"He fought, fought, and fought. Even in front of the wooden sword that could easily break his bones, he showed no fear. And the sword he swung had life stored inside."

"Is it that great? Isn't it normal to not be afraid of a sword when swinging and to bet one's life on it?"

"It's great. It's very great. I realized then. Although physical strength could be build up by training, mental strength you have to be born with. Truthfully, just how many would really fight with their life on the line in a world like this?"

"....."

"A person who can throw one's life away for a belief. A mentally

strong person. Leaving physical conditions behind, I then realized that his heart was the strongest in the world. After that, my sword skill became much stronger.”

Han SangChual’s freshman finally understood.

A sword swung with sincerity.

If it was a person who could swing such a sword, leaving the time spent for learning aside, they could bow to him.

‘A ridiculously strong minded person.’

‘Memorize the face and never touch him.’

Han SangChual told the freshman to pledge to him.

“There has been word from the dojang’s Sahyung. From now on, if you meet him, bow to him. If you don’t, I’ll be killed.”

“Yes, sir.”

Chapter 9: Planted Seeds

Thanks to the “Warm Lovers'” statue effect, Weed had more resistance to the cold. Although he still had the remnants of a cold, his condition would not get worse.

Thereafter hunting was much easier. Along with Alveron and Seoyoon, they had spent nearly fifty days in the Versailles Continent, continuously fighting Ice Trolls.

“There’s no end to killing them.”

Ice trolls have frightening regeneration ability. If a limb was cut off, it would be grow back in just a short time. When their Health drops really low, it will only require them a few minutes to regenerate it.

With 1-2 people it seems like going up against an invincible army. It was a good thing that there was a cliff and the Ice Trolls couldn’t get down from it.

“Now we know why the quest had high difficulty.”

When he fought with the Legions of Undead, he used information he had against them. But the Ice Trolls were different level, and thus, they were harder to deal with.

Weed had to change his strategy.

"It's too difficult fight Trolls if we separate. Wyverns, fly up into the sky and grab a hold of the Ice Trolls! And from there, drop them down here."

The Wyverns brought the Ice Trolls down from the cliff one at a time.

I'll be able to get a lot of the Ice Troll's blood which is used to create potions that restores Health!

Divide and Conquer!

With Weed's instinct, he was able to form a great strategy.

"Listen, you have to bring them into a secluded area so we subjugate them!"

Since early childhood, Weed had already mastered the art of hard work. Because of the fall and their teamwork, the monsters' morale dropped quite significantly.

Ice Trolls weren't like other monsters, so when they are not mobbed together, hunting them was lot easier. They caught it and killed it before they had a chance to use their regeneration ability.

"Moonlight Sculpting Sword!"

Weed raised his sword.

The Ice Trolls were overpowered by the beautiful ornate sword. Now the situation of the battle has been reversed.

It was by no means a fair fight. He killed them all before they could try to regenerate their health.

“Kuooooo!”

Even as they were about to die, the Ice Trolls resisted and swung their Axes aimed at their feet.

Ignoring the incoming strikes, he shouted.

“Cold Eyes!”

He closed his eyes from the Ice Trolls’ incoming attacks.

If you do not try to predict the occurrence of the battle, winning would be impossible. That was Weed’s way of battle.

Trapping the monster quickly and decisively!

“Ahh! Die. I’ll kill you!”

With his eyes closed, he swung his wielded sword.

It looked like an ignorant action that even a novice wouldn't do.

It was tantamount to the most disgraceful behavior in battle.

Whenever Seoyoon attacked, her sword leaves an afterimage of a black hue.

A Berserker's attack to kill Ice Trolls.

The profession that gets stronger as one slaughters and sees blood!

While they are weaker in shorter fights, the longer the battle goes on for the stronger they get. During combat, although briefly, she could forget about her pain.

Although the tension on Seoyoon's face showed that the battle was difficult, she never once looked towards Weed.

'No, no, don't look...'

She did not want Weed to see.

If he saw her fighting, he would start laughing. Because of this she desperately turned her head away.

With his eyes closed fighting, Weed turned towards where Seoyoon fought.

Alveron silently healed the Wyverns and Bingryong's Health whenever it got low.

Hunting in the Valley of Death for over 50 days! Finally, the number of trolls decreased. No matter how they tried to escape the Wyvern's grasp, their efforts were in vain.

Weed looked up at the bright blue sky impatiently.

“I can't believe all of them disappeared!”

As if looking for chicks in a chicken farm, it was hard to find Ice Trolls, even after rubbing one's eyes. Although it was because he was earnestly hunting them, he was filled with regret.

“Now it looks like I will not be able to procure the Ice Troll's blood, which I'm certain I can make money off of.”

But when he suddenly spotted a large group of Ice Trolls, he was happy. Like a farmer who saw a well grown grain in his field, even though it was possible to be crushed to death for that single grain.

For every bottle filled with Ice Troll's blood, Weed earned approximately 5,300 gold.

Rapid recovery potions. It increases Stamina and Health recovery, and they were produced in large quantities and placed inside his bag.

Because of limited supply of potions, it was worth an arm and a leg. During hunts, it was rare for people to use such potions, but it can be extremely useful during a Guild Siege.

“Heu heu heu.”

Weed laughed at the sight of blood! He laughed with joy to the extent that his stomach began to hurt.

“...”

Alveron and Seoyoon showed no reaction while they watched Weed.

After seeing it for a day or two they got used to it. Although Weed’s behavior was strange, he was trained in disciplining himself. And soon, Weed returned to his usual attitude.

“Would you want to go hunting again, Alveron?”

“Yes.”

“Use your holy magic. From now on, we’re going to need it for the upcoming battles.”

“Okay.”

Alveron blessed both Bingryong and the Wyverns.

First, Weed commanded Bingryong and the Wyverns so that they would attack the Lamias. Up until now, the strategy had been to attack only the Ice Trolls in order extract their blood, but from now on the plan had been changed to capture the Valley of Death.

Weed's current level was 312.

From the time Bingryong and the Wyverns were brought to life, their skill levels had risen significantly. Now, they didn't have a hard time defeating the Lamias.

Weed's level would have risen beyond level 300 a long time ago, but because he had given life to many sculptures, he constantly lost levels. Although he hunted to death with Pale and the rest of his party, he was only able to get his level a little over 300. His levels were mainly gained through battles he fought in the Valley of Death.

Weed's eyes shone.

‘It is finally time to aggressively conquer the Valley of Death!’

The Wyverns and Bingryong were fighting extremely well.

Compared to dealing with the Ice Trolls, Lamias had relatively weak defense.

"We are the elegant Lamias."

"Try not to fall for our charm."

"Venom of Eucla!"

"Shoot them with poison stingers!"

The Lamias opened fire and fought in turmoil.

The icy road allowed the Lamias with snake like bodies to move quickly by gliding across it.

Although they provided formidable resistance to ice attacks, they fell quickly to the Wyverns' offense. Bingryong lifted itself off the ground with its big wings and used its claws to attack.

"My body is huge. But why are my legs so short!"

Venting his dissatisfaction, he continued to complain.

Compared to his enormous body, his feet were abnormally short. Because of this he hesitated to walk even during battles.

“There’s no law stating that great works of art must have convenience in action.”

Weed’s excuse was because there were problems with the nature of the ice.

In order to properly distribute the weight, short thick legs worked better than long legs. Thanks to Bingryong’s huge body only short thick legs could support him.

Nevertheless, Bingryong and the Wyverns cornered the terrified Lamias. Without the protection of the Ice Trolls, the Lamias downfall was inevitable.

A one-sided massacre!

Groups of mere level 200 Lamias came and died quickly.

Initially, without the cluster of Ice Trolls supporting them, Lamias were nothing but a small threat.

The Lamias died leaving spoils such as snake leather, gold, silver, poison stings, and some ores.

“We did it.”

“Keurwawrawrarwa!”

The Wyverns and Bingryong flew up in the sky and let out a loud roar.

Weed's eyes were focused on the opposite cliff. In between the valleys, there were a bunch of clustered groups of monsters.

The Lizard King, Possessed Soldiers, Dibase's Priests, Demonic Followers, and Puppets.

These various kinds of monsters formed into one large army.

Chuk!

Weed raised his hands summoning Bingryong and the Wyverns.

“Alveron, heal and bless them so they can continue to fight, the battle is not over.”

“Ok, I will regenerate their exhausted Stamina.”

The Wyverns and Bingryong set out again.

“Kuooo!”

Bingryong and the Wyverns were flying around while fighting the Lamias and other monsters in the Valley of Death.

The Lizard King wielded an axe, while the demonic followers stabbed their enemies with spears and swords.

“The roughly flowing melted snow, through the dark and moist power, will strengthen your flesh. Bloodlust!”

The Dibase Priests casted blessing spells on the monsters. Unlike Alveron’s divine magic, which had no side effects, the aftereffects were huge. It was similar to curse magic that temporarily enhanced attack.

“Dibase ordered us to cast flame magic on the huge lump of ice.”

“Dibase ordered the Possessed Soldiers to attack the Wyverns without delay.”

“Dibase commanded his minions. Behold, we will demonstrate what will happen to those who dared oppose us!”

The Dibase Priests commanded the Legions of monsters. Monsters who were void of faith, overflowing with evil and greed, followed the Priests.

Since they became united through the accurate command organization, the army of monsters were able to block the Wyvern’s attacks with ease. Bingryong’s attacks were also not very effective.

Once on the ground dozens charged devoid of fear. The monsters

commanded by the Dibase Priests did not completely dwindle.

“Ice Bolt!”

Even though Bingryong used his prided Ice Magic with enormous power, the Priests were able to counter it by casting flame magic.

The Wyverns circled the sky not fighting properly. While Bingryong was too scared and didn't want to continue fighting.

“It looks to be going alright. However, this isn't the end.”

Weed's eyes were glinting coldly.

Going by the Versailles Continent's time, he had spent more than fifty days. If you add the days it took to get to the Valley of Dead after arriving to the North, the accumulated days would be greater.

Weed's perspective, those who diligently earned money, could not afford to struggle in a place like this.

“Call forth Death Knight Van Hawk. Call forth Vampire Lord Tori!”

Weed summoned all of his statues.

He even called forth Van Hawk and Tori!

A black vortex appeared when Van Hawk was summoned, holding on to a sword.

“M..ma..ma..Master! You called!”

He stuttered with his words.

It was a misconception that, because they were pale, the undead were unaffected by the temperature. The cold from this place could freeze their bones!

Ttak. Ttak. Ttak. Ttak!

Death Knight was making a clattering sound with his teeth.

The contrast between his pale white skin and his bright red lips! However, Vampire Tori, who was wearing a red and black cape that was pretty laid back.

“This place is not too far from my hometown. Morata! I miss it. The frigid winds, snow, the ice storms, and the place where loneliness and hot passions are alive and breathing. It’s a place where the beauty of the brilliant light is alive. It would have been perfect if I had a beautiful maiden by my side. What a pity.”

The Vampire Lord Tori was delighted by the cold, while looking for a woman to turn into an artwork.

Weed glanced at Seoyoon.

On Earth, her beauty unmatched.

Even though he saw Seoyoon, who even had countless sculptures in her image, Tori showed no reaction.

‘Is it because we were in the same party?’

Weed and Seoyoon were in a party. Thanks to that, Tori did not harbor any attraction towards Seoyoon.

Nevertheless, for Weed, it was another nuisance out of the way.

Tori wrinkled his nose and sniffed.

“What is this smell? It’s very vulgar, but it’s a smell that leaves a sweet taste in my mouth.”

When it comes to the smell blood, Tori was an expert.

Traces of Ice Troll’s blood exquisite scent were the cause of his sniffing.

He could have summoned Tori earlier. He could have cleaned up the Ice Trolls faster had he done so. However, in exchange, he

would have had to give up on extracting the Ice Troll's blood.

Because of that, Weed did not summoned Tori.

Since the Ice Trolls were defeated, he could now mobilize Tori in battle.

“Tori, you go out and fight as well.”

“You dare command me?”

Tori asked arrogantly.

Since he had not been summoned for a while, he could not recognize his master.

It was the same Tori, who had the time of his life as he fought the Immortal Army along with the Wyverns!

His self-esteem grew along with his abilities and his level.

Weed wrinkled his brow.

“I am commanding you. Now go out and fight.”

“Then I'll say something as well. Since it's a bother, I would like it if you didn't summon me for such trivial tasks.”

Contrary to his ability, Tori was an irritating boss monster! However, this doesn't mean that Weed had no use of him.

“It seems like you haven't been beaten enough.”

“...”

“Shall we chat again once after I've beaten you continuously for about ten more days?”

The ruthless violence that Weed used when flattery and appeasement failed!

Shink.

Nearby, Seoyoon also sent a silent threat. She was going to help Weed since the Vampire he summoned did not seem like it would obey.

Since even Alveron was preparing his divine magic, Tori had no choice, but to unwillingly start walking towards the enemies.

However, after walking a few steps Tori turned around with a serious expression and said.

“Master, I have something to say.”

“What is it?”

“Have you ever heard of the Vampire Kingdom?”

“Is there such a place?”

It was the first time he had heard of it.

The history of the Versailles Continent only gave a brief description of the Vampire Race.

“Vampire Kingdom Todium! It exists below ground. An everlasting Kingdom of Darkness. Thanks to Master, I have grown stronger so I should be heading back.”

“... Heading back?”

“It is my obligation as a Vampire. In a month’s time in the Versailles Continent, the entrance will open for 89 days.”

“Doing that would breach the contract...”

“The contract will end. However if you desire, with my name, I will pledged my immortal life to you.”

Tori wanted to rid himself of his constraints. But he could

already guess what the next words would be.

‘When it comes to hunting, there is a limitation where Tori could be useful.’

A level 400 high-leveled boss monster. He was very useful thanks to his Vampire characteristics. However he could only use it to feed himself.

‘He always had this limitation from the beginning.’

Weed shook his head.

“I do not want your life.”

He had no intention of taking Tori’s life.

He had seriously considered killing Tori just so that he could get his items. However, Tori’s equipment was pretty useless.

All his equipment were limited to Vampire Lord, and unlike with Orcs and Elves, other than Dark Wizards, monster-only items had no sale value.

“Thank you. When I leave for Todium later, if you want, I can guide you there. It might be the first time any human has gone there, and even in the future you won’t be able to find another person who would be able to enter the tomb of the Vampires who

are Nobles of the Night.”

Ttiring!

Vampire Lord Tori has invited you to the Noble City of the Night, Todium! Ancient artwork and gems, a City not found on the ground, inhabited by beautiful women and hundred millions of rats and bats.

In three months’ time, Vampire Lord Tori, has invited you and your colleagues to Todium.

Weed tilted his head slightly and nodded.

‘As expected, my prediction was right.’

Death Knight and Vampire Tori have grown excessively.

They would not always simply exist as a burden. If one raised them above a certain level, they could obtain a special quest or gain access to a certain area.

Tori headed towards the Valley of Death.

“My family, reveal yourselves.”

“You have called, My lord.”

The beautiful Vampire Queens, and young Vampires wearing mantles, suddenly appeared.

“The blood-filled enemies are over there.”

“My thirst is rising. Lord.”

“Although we may not be able to increase our family yet, we can look forward to drinking blood. Let’s go!”

“Yes, My Lord.”

“Veil of Darkness!”

Tori and the other Vampires hid their bodies in the darkness.

And in a flash, they appeared around the Priests of Dibase and the Demonic Followers that were above the valley.

“The Nobility of the Night!”

“Evil Vampires appeared!”

Tori extended his nails and greatly damaged the Priests of Dibase, while the other familiars were appearing and disappearing. The young Vampires were also moving diligently, and the Vampire

Queen snared the Demonic Followers using their spells.

However, the young Vampires were no match for the Possessed Soldiers. If they were fighting humans with blood and life, they could use their powers to their hearts content, but these enemies were ensnared by evil. Even though they were fallen possessed soldiers, the Vampires' powers were not shaken.

“Tornado Blade!”

Crash!

Tori created an enormous tornado around the area where enemies were gathered and killed several people.

Because the large Tornado Blade swept throughout the area, the bodies of the Priests of Dibase were battered and ripped apart. Snow and ice were strewn everywhere. Because the strength of the storm was so strong, the impact made the Wyverns stagger.

“Blood Drain!”

Tori consumed a large amount of mana with each attack.

Only when he was drained of mana would he weaken, but he could replenish his strength by feeding upon the Priests of Dibase.

Tori's eyes would also turn grey.

“You lot that don’t take me seriously, those whose blood was sucked by me, turn to stone.”

Crack!

The gathered Possessed Soldiers’ bodies hardened and turned to stone. It was the effect of the Vampire’s Curse.

Van Hawk brandished his sword and led his subordinates. Bingryong and the Wyverns, with Geumini, claimed the skies. Weed and Seoyoon also joined the battle. They climbed up the cliff and fought the monsters.

“Moonlight Sculpting Blade!”

Relying on the trustworthy defense of Tallock’s Armor, on top of cliff, he wielded his sword. As he did so, his sobering eyes searched every direction.

During a close combat, one’s gaze must not be fixed on a certain place. It must always be appraising the situation of both allies and enemies.

Especially in a situation similar to now when there were many monsters to fight, the skill was necessary.

The Priests of Dibase were on the verge of dying from the fangs of

the Vampires.

“7 Celestial Steps!”

It’s been awhile since I’ve used this footwork!

He could use his full speed and change his directions in the middle of each of the 7 steps.

Since the skill completely ignores common knowledge, it makes it difficult to use during battle.

But if you could utilize the skill well, you could gain far superior attacking power than others.

Weed ran in between the Vampires.

With the dazzling footwork, he was able to get in front of the Dibase Priests.

“Die!”

Weed swung his sword in the direction where his body was moving.

The excessive sword barely grazed its neck, but, as it returned, it sliced its chest.

You have dealt a fatal blow!

As its blood was flowing down, the Priest of Dibase, who was in front of him in the brink of death, died.

You have gained experience.

Because they weren't regular monsters, the priests gave at least 30% more experience.

But before he could check how much experience he received, a mace-wielding Evil Spirit Follower had followed him closely behind, attacked.

“Kkiyaaat!”

While shouting a battle cry, it swung the mace.

Weed lowered his body forward without even looking backwards. He rolled on the ground, and got up immediately. When Weed got up, his hand held a bag full of gold coins. Some time when he was on the ground, he had picked up the loot.

‘As expected, there’s plenty.’

Dibase was a deity of the rich. That was why the Priests of Dibase had a lot of money.

One could also tell that from the way they spoke while they fought against the Vampires.

“I’ll give you plenty of money if you follow me.”

“I’ll give you this jewel so believe in us.”

“All I have is money...”

They tried to appease and lure them with money.

Although the Vampires, being Nobles of the Night, were too prideful to fall for it, if they were money-loving Orcs, they would have undoubtedly sided with the priests of Dibase.

Weed looked around carefully with keen eyes.

He had no interest in the evil spirit followers, who only dropped japtem.

He grasped the general location of the priests of Dibase, and took their Stamina into account to try and squeezed out every last copper from them.

“Seven Celestial Steps!”

Weed was quickly moving through the monsters and quickly picked out the Priests of Dibase! He was disciplined to acquire the best items from any monster.

Chapter 10: Raid

Sswaaaaa!

Under the breathtaking waterfall, five men were brandishing their swords.

"14,930,641!"

"14,930,642!"

"14,930,643!"

The sword-wielding men were shouting astronomical numbers!

They were the Geomchis.

Geomchi, Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5!

After parting with Pale and the rest of the party, they went deep inside the Yuroki Mountains to practice their sword.

Geomchi3 swung his sword blissfully.

"Only strong men are popular in the world! Strong men don't need to be afraid or suffer from anything."

In reality, strong men weren't the lady-killers they believed in from the stories. Of course, women of the same age were afraid of them, even their mothers and little sisters were afraid.

Every day, they practiced their swordsmanship with earnest.

“Mom, please give me some food!”

Geomchi₃ yelled the moment he reached home. he was very hungry.

“Oh, alright, I'll make you some. Just wait for a short while...”

However, while cooking, his mother trembled with fear.

Mastering the sword also disciplined the mind and body, and was meant to help live righteously. Although there was no case of severe malice behavior towards his family, the change in his look and voice was enough to scare his mother.

This was only the beginning.

Some days he just shouted thoughtlessly.

“I'm hungry!”

“Kkkkaaaaaaaaaackk!”

Crash!

She dropped the bowl she was carrying and shrieked.

Although she adores her children, she suffered from fear watching her child getting tougher day by day.

Because of that, Geomchi3 actively considered abandoning the sword and sat alone to have a talk with his dad.

“Father.”

“Yes? Speak. Tell me. Whatever you want.”

“Will you hear me out?”

“Why are you so serious? Father will listen...”

“I was planning on stopping to learn the sword and follow in your footsteps and work.”

“Keoheok!! You’re saying you want to be like me?”

Geomchi3’s father ran a rice factory.

The store receives many orders via internet, including from large supermarkets. They used to hire many workers to help them with the store.

According to Geomchi3's judgement, the family business seemed to be doing well.

But his father just shook his head.

"That's not right. You have to do what you want. Learn the sword. What are your thoughts about studying abroad? For about 10 years..."

"..."

Geomchi3's childhood mental traumas did not end there. It was hard for him to look at himself in the mirror after washing his face, but his family were careful not to hurt his feelings.

Geomchi4 wasn't any different.

In junior high, walking through the alleys.

"Hey! You come over here and take a look at this."

He was called by the neighborhood bully and he was part of a High School gang. He was smoking cigarettes and chewed gum.

Geomchi⁴ slowly lifted his head. And looked at him straight in the eyes.

“I’m sorry.”

“I’ve made a mistake.”

“Spare me...”

The bully quickly put out his cigarette and apologized.

The rumors that were spread about Geomchi⁴ being a thug that no one should ever mess with, during his childhood days. Geomchi⁵ also had his situation.

National Id cards came out not too long before his sophomore year of highschool, and the government began large scale cleanup operations against gang members.

Because of his threatening scowl, while he was walking on the road, there was a time when he was arrested and dragged to the police station.

It was definitely a situation he should be angry with, but he held himself back. Mainly because among the thugs who were dragged to the police station, many were punched around by Geomchi⁵!

The Geomchis, who were all hiding away painful experiences, found hope in Royal Road.

Geomchi2 spoke.

“This place could be our paradise.”

“That’s right. Sahyung.”

“If we raise our level then we can meet girls!”

Geomchi3 and Geomchi4 said out loudly.

There were a lot of single men in modern times. However, to these guys who have never dated even once, a “woman” was a very urgent problem.

The only women they knew were their mothers and family. They were naive men who had never kissed a girl.

Geomchi3’s eyes shone brightly.

“Therefore, let’s give it our all. We can’t spend our time idly.”

“Okay. I understand!”

Geomchis trained deep in the mountains and valleys.

They hunted monsters to raise their levels. They embraced the advice that Weed had given them.

At their inquiry of the method to becoming a master, Weed answered.

“You only have to work hard.”

It was a very simple advice.

Geomchi2 was the one who came up and personally asked. Since he was asking a much younger disciple, although it hurt his pride, the pressing desire was greater of importance.

The hope of the old bachelors to get married even a day sooner!

“Is there any way we can raise our levels and fame even a bit faster?”

“Um, If that’s what you’re after, there’s no other way than to work hard. You have to put in much more effort than others.”

“What kind of effort do we perform? If it’s hunting monsters, we have confidence in that.”

Fighting became second nature to Geomchi2, as much as sleeping or eating was.

The monsters of Royal Road had a set attack pattern. The wolves favored frontal attacks, and the thieves used poison-coated daggers. In cases where monsters wielded axes, one had to watch out for fast and straightforward attacks.

Because the Geomchis figured out their individual weapon's timing and the enemy's movements, they were able to hunt more efficiently.

Weed spoke his personal secret.

“You must sincerely work hard. In the master's or senior's case, you can raise your defense to a certain extent by wearing better gear.”

Geomchi2 nodded his head. After wearing the defensive items, the damage dealt by monsters lessened tremendously.

“You're right. It's much better wearing armor.”

“Since it's heavy, it'll dull your movements, but it's a sacrifice for better defense. Also, if you take a lot of hits every once in awhile, you can raise your Fortitude and Fighting Spirit, which will help you in the long run. Though it will hurt a bit.”

“Getting hit many times... If you want to master the sword, it is something everyone has experienced. And what else?”

“It should be fine if you can supplement your weakness this way. However, to raise your level really quickly, you must have high damage.”

“Hm, You’re right. You have to have high damage to hunt quickly. But how do you go about doing that?

“You have to raise your sword skill.”

The importance of skills in Royal Road could not be overemphasized. It was revealed that even the highest leveled player, BardRay's, sword skill was only at Advanced level 4.

There could be many reasons for that.

While leading a large party mainly to hunt monsters that gave a lot of experience, there was not enough opportunity to swing a sword. Because he favored using powerful skills rather than basic swordsmanship, the proficiency of this skills were on the lower end.

The art of swordsmanship was the basics of battle.

Depending on the Sword skills level, it may exert enormous attack power.

The Geomchi’s had only one goal.

To master the sword!

Also to pave the road for the next generation of swordsmen.

The goal was to challenge the unthinkable.

The plan was simple. While mastering swordsmanship, they would also increase their levels.

Always hunt monsters at the same level or slightly higher than yourself. After mastering swordsmanship the damage done during hunts was overwhelming. This made level ups come faster.

Although Weed spends a lot of time on other skills, he does not lag behind others due to this.

Weed gave this advice. This advice was nothing special. If you played Royal Road then you would have already known this.

But not everyone could follow this advice.

Most people who played Royal Road were doing so just to enjoy it. Only less than 10% of the players played with the purpose of hunting. This was not a number to ignore, the amount of effort done by this 10% was much larger.

Not many people could wield a sword for 18 hours straight. Who can for 1 month, 2 months, three months?

Most likely, many will not be able to.

But to the Geomchis this was possible.

“When there were doing our most favorite work, it does not feel fun.”

“I’ve held a sword every day since I was 7 years old up till now at 35 years old.”

While the Geomchis were near the waterfalls of trees, monsters would sometimes spawn, and they would brandish their sword. Becoming the true monsters.

While learning the way of the sword, Geomchi3 occasionally saw the teacher’s questioning stares.

The Sword!

He was the most enthusiastic student when he held a sword. Whenever he felt the stares of the other students he blushed.

“Royal Road has no law restricting old people right? We aren’t married yet...”

Weed hunted day and night.

Due to the “Warm Lovers” statue, they did not catch a cold and they’ve increased their hunting speed.

Since fighting the Ice Trolls, Lamias and the other monsters on the cliffs, four days had passed. Because of the Dibase Priests, the Death Knight and Vampires had lost about half their forces.

The situation where the threat of the monster decreased!

“Those monster trampled the plants and most of the herbs have disappeared.”

Early in the morning Weed had went back down into the Valley of Death to plant herbs.

“Identify!”

Wood Elf seeds:Durabilty 1/1.A seed of variety of flowers, trees and herbs.

Although the seeds are quite rare, majority of the seeds are in good condition.

Due to the blessing of the elves, they can be planted anywhere, but they grow faster in fertile places.

Quantity: 100,000.

There was as many as a hundred thousand different seeds.

Weed pulled out Zahab's carving knife and looked up at the sky.

The Myriad of stars were glittering.

The fresh air and a cool breeze..

This was a very warm day in the north.

"This is good weather to plant seeds."

Weed squatted on the ground and began to dig a hole with his knife. Weed used Zahab's knife as a trowel.

Breaking the ice, digging up dirt and then planting the seed.

"You should grow well."

He moderately divided the seeds and planted them according to their size.

For the big seeds, he sparsely planted them, for the lighter plants,

he carefully gathered them and planted.

Weed had some experience. In the past, he cared for a small plantation.

The truth be told, he could not even imagine buying the ingredients for the side dishes!

Lettuce, bean sprouts, these were vegetables that were grown in a small yard and then eaten.

Maintaining plant sprouts was very easy. Once they were germinated, the plants grow very quickly. When these vegetables were mixed with rice and hot pepper paste it created a wonderful dish. Ten thousand won does not go very far at a restaurant but this way it could be used efficiently.

Even for an apple tree, two trees would be planted and all the fruits would be eaten.

Having lived like that, made planting seeds in proper ground easy.

Only for those people who are tolerant and used to hard labor!

Weed planted seeds from place to place and after 1 hour he got worried that the sprout had not broken the surface. The seeds germinated and absorbed the nutrients around them and grew at remarkable at a speed.

1 day, 2 days, 3 days!

As time passed and the monsters in the Valley of Death decreased, the area where seeds were planted increased little by little. Green plants grew bewilderingly here and there like weeds. Most grew into flowering plants, but some grew into trees.

Weed fought monsters while he waited for the trees and plants to grow.

It was not necessary to wipe out all of the monsters. But in order to make sure that no monster trampled on the plants he had to wipe them all out.

Weed planted around the area that the Vampires, Death Knight, Bingryong and the Wyverns defended. They laid out the defense for the plants. At this time Alveron was also a big help.

Alveron carefully planted the seeds.

“Weed-nim.”

“Yes?”

“The goddess Freya likes the birth of new life. Do you mind if I pray for bountiful harvest?”

The goddess Freya was the symbol of abundance. Therefore if Alveron prayed it would increase the effect of the harvested plants 2 fold or even 3 fold.

“In order for them to grow quickly please do.”

“Yes. Merciful Goddess Freya, by the power of the earth grant these crops thy bounty.”

The trees started to grow quickly after Alveron’s prayer. When the sun hit them they sucked up the surrounding nutrients and grew at a remarkable speed. With just the blessing of the Elves this speed would be impossible.

Soon the trees held abundant fruit. There was common fruits like apples, grapes, peaches, plums, banks, walnuts, acorns, and chestnuts. The trees held a large variety of fruits.

Weed was also able to harvest wheat and rice.

“Finally, it’s time to eat.”

Weed gathered up the fruit.

Ice apples. Ice peaches!

After carving the hard layer off the rest of the fruits were

delicious.

Weed dug up potatoes, sweet potatoes and even medical herbs.

Red herbs help wounds heal faster. The most abundant were the yellow herbs that increases Stamina recovery.

“Fruit salad! Plum tea and bread can be made with chestnuts.”

As a cook Weed could make many dishes. Desserts could raise stats even more when eaten. As the trees blocked the cold wind, the area became more convenient.

As if filled with Weed’s desire the ground in the Valley of Death became over run with flowers and trees. Plants grew up to the border of the monster’s territory, trees did not grow over a fixed boundary.

Where the strong chilling wind of the Valley of Death blew, plants would not grow.

“There is something here.”

Weed looked down into the Valley of Death from the cliffs above.

The area was blocked with ice.

Inside the deepest part of the Valley there was a huge chilling wind blew..

As accessible as the cliff was he could not get any closer. Most of the cold wind blew upwards into the sky.

Even with the effects of the warm food and the statue, the wind was unbearably cold.

“To complete the quest we have to travel farther in...”

Weed could not advance from the cliffs. He had to enter from the front of the Valley of Death.

Two quests in one. In order to investigate the wind that was blowing onto the plants in the Valley of Death Weed would have to go inside.

“The problem is the monsters...”

The native monsters of the Valley of Death!

They were around the mid level 300s. But it would be a whole different story when the boss came out.

With this many strong monsters, the level of the boss monsters were bound to be stronger. You cannot even imagine the problem at the moment, it would be different depending on which monsters

showed up.

“This is a special region in the history of the Nifleheim Empire’s downfall. So it wouldn’t be unusual for extraordinary monsters to show up.”

Weed felt a sense of alarm.

The bosses should at least be as strong as Tori, or even as strong as the Lich Shire!

*

Meanwhile the Northern Expedition led by the Cold Roses guild suffered as they moved. Then one of the Rangers scouted out a path.

"The position of what was once the largest Castle of the Northern Village has been found. But we've yet to acquire any information related to our goal. Maybe more information can be found by walking around in the town and Castle."

Drum made the report in a weak voice. Guild master Oberon listened to Wizard Drum as he finished.

“We can’t explore in that way. They’re already talking about us resentfully.”

If not for Oberon's reputation and guild's power, the saturated complaints about the expedition would have been enough to break the expedition apart.

Doreum nodded in agreement.

“Then there is only one way.”

“Only one?”

“The best option is to move to a higher elevation. Sendeim Valley. We will go to what the Northern residents call the Valley of Death.”

People gazed, wide-eyed, at their new destination on the map.

The terrain map of the Northern Region has been completed by direct reconnaissance. The villages were listed but the interiors had not been explored. Indeed, only the name and location could be seen on the basic map.

Kerberos found the Valley of Death. It was a secluded place in the very North of the Northern Continent.

“A place close to the capital of the Nifleheim Empire. It's close to Bent Castle. Is there a reason we need to go?”

The ranger simply replied.

“Because that place is very cold.”

“It’s freezing?”

"Yes. It is the coldest part of the Northern Continent. Try to recall if you have something that can lower the temperature of the continent. Judging by the rumors, perhaps the Serbian Witch's necklace is broken."

“The broken glass bead necklace of the Serbian Witch!”

The Serbian Witch that appeared in the Versailles Continent’s history.

She made many things. Serbian’s broken beads were among the highest grade of unique items ever recorded.

“I can’t be sure, but, according to the information we received from the travellers and the locals, the Northern Continent was not an area that was originally this cold.

“You’re saying that the reason the North is this cold is due to the broken beads of Serbian, right?”

“It is likely the case.”

Oberon, Drum and Kerberos’s eyes met.

At this point, they had no better option.

Oberon decided.

“Okay. Let’s head to the Valley of Death.”

The expedition clutched their hungry bellies as they marched.

There was not much food supply remaining.

Although the Rangers could have moved away from the group to hunt for food, they were the only ones who knew the precise location of the Valley of Death, therefore staying together was less risky.

Whiiing!

Every time a cold wind blew, the expeditionary forces shrank their bodies. Especially during the ice storms, they weathered under a hill that left the expeditionary force shivering in fear.

“If this keeps up we’re going to wiped out.”

“It’s fine. Just make sure to watch out for incoming storms.”

"Of course! I will be watching carefully with both eyes. Don't

worry about me."

Pavo and Gaston stuck together.

An Architect is needed to dig a hole. Therefore if you were beside him during an ice storm, you can crawl inside the hole until it is safe to come out again.

There were a lot of artisan surrounding Pavo. Artisans such as Blacksmiths, and Tailors.

"Whew, we are going to need the Architects to survive."

Pavo did not think of this and shook his head.

They had dreamed about an adventure. If they wanted to build strong building they would need them. However he did not want to rely on other people and felt bad. Around Pavo the cooks were getting cold stares.

"They should have some food to spare...."

"They irresponsibly used up all the food ingredients."

The cooks thought differently.

'They eagerly ate when we cooked for them.'

‘Lets try to make something tastier.’

‘We just cook its not our fault!’

However it was not the time to complain, the Cooks could only hold on their complains.

Hunger forced the expedition into the Valley of Death. Though they expected snowstorms and ice, they met neither one.

But as they moved deeper into the Valley they were met with a tremendous cold wind.

“Ah-Choo.”

“Bless you!”

The expedition much like a group of refugees went through many hardships but finally arrived at their destination. They were surprised yet again.

“There are flowers that bloom even in this cold ground.”

“There are trees growing.”

The yellow flowers that did not match their surroundings were

blooming everywhere. The trees were blocking the strong wind that the Valley was so proud of.

The rangers did nothing but gawk.

“When we came before we didn’t.....”

“This wasn't here before, where did all of the ice go?”

Oberon asked in a calm but serious manner..

“What's going on?”

Doreum shook his head.

“I’m sorry. I do not know.”

They were happy to see a valley filled with flowers instead of ice. In fact this scene was burned into their memory for some time.

Any expression of coldness and clattering teeths dissipated. To them, the place was unlike any other.

The expedition was surprise that it was really happening. The people stood at the entrance to the Valley of Death!

They sighted Weed.

Weed, Seoyoon, and Alveron all stood downwind. Oberon and the expedition came slowly through the snow.

But all their eyes, filled with surprised, settled on Weed.

“That man, is Weed right?”

“That’s right. I saw Sculptor Weed in Rodium.”

Gaston and Pabo knew of Weed

Dark Gamer Volk also heard of him.

“A Sculptor named Weed?”

“Honey! You said the Sculptor of Rosenheim Kingdom went by the same name, right?”

“The name Weed is not uncommon. But the face... is the same! Weed. It’s the Weed who carved the bouquet I confessed with!”

Volk’s eyes were open wide surprise.

His attire was different from what he wore in Rhodium. When Volk initially met Weed he looked like the most wretched of beggars. He only noticed the similar face when Weed was dressed

in rags. But after hearing the name Volk was quite certain.

“We finally meet again, Weed.”

Volk wanted to see Weed. But he would have never thought that he would find him in the Northern Continent, where no players ever ventured. He began to run towards Weed.

“Weed!”

“Hey it’s Geomchi320!”

"Come here and make me some food. I'm starving. The food you make is incredible tasty."

“Euheoheoheong”

The hungry Geomchis made their way towards Weed. Oberon, Kerberos, and Drum listened to the conversation of Volk and the others.

“Sculptor?”

Drum said with interested.

“So it seems to be.”

Oberon nodded in agreement..

“That guy is the famous Sculptor who carved the Sphinx?”

After making the Sphinx statue, all the guilds wanted to recruit him.

Oberon also sent people to recruit him but by then Weed had already left the Rosenheim Kingdom. He had wanted to somehow meet Weed, but had not expected to see him here.

Kerberos smiled brightly.

“If he is the Sculptor Weed then we are fortunate indeed.”

Drum readily agreed.

“If he created a sculpture somewhere here, it'll be a big help to the expedition.”

As usual, Weed was not pleased of their arrival. The expedition had sprouted a new awareness of the Artist Professions and the Production Professions.

Especially in extreme weather conditions, struggling to live is bound to take a toll. Open appreciation to the professions!

Other Productions and Art Professions did not have the opportunity.

They had been ignored and were not able to adapt to a normal hunting party. However, even for himself, it was difficult to survive in the Northern Continent, therefore it showed their remarkable ability.

The novice Sculptor Depp had made a fire sculpture!

A large number of people benefited from that sculpture.

The usefulness of sculptors was recognized.

Weed took the expedition to the place where his statue was.

“It’s warm.”

“Now I feel like I’ll live.”

The Geomchis were able to lie down and stretch their legs.

Oberon and the rest of the expedition saw the Geomchis and the statues.

“Could this be the effect of the statues?”

Oberon and the rest were surprised.

The air around the statue was different. It was easier to breathe and gave off warmth.

Because it was cold earlier on, they were not able to use their full strength in combat. But now, they no longer felt the cold.

“Sculptors, what an amazing profession.”

But the surprise of the expedition did not end with this. When they ate the food Weed made they realized just how much their stats went up by.

The blacksmith Truman came up to Weed sneakily. He was an old man with a white beard.

“Sculptors are awesome. The dexterity behind these works is amazing, what’s skill caused this?”

Truman had knowledge about other Production classes, including the Artist Profession.

Sculptor itself was very hard to level up. But if it was leveled up, they can reveal to be a prominent profession throughout many areas.

With keen eyes, Weed scanned Truman up and down.

‘Hammer of Palmoru. It increases the effect of items forged by a Blacksmith by 20%.’

It was a unique item that could be sold over a few million won over the auction site. A Sculptor's engraving knife, unlike Blacksmith Supplies, were fairly common.

Wearing an armor exclusive to Knight Profession.

‘A blacksmith could wear any armor. Is this a person from the expedition? This was old man must be Truman.’

Weed was much happier after identifying the other person.

“I've seen you before.”

“Oh, this is amazing. You're probably at the forefront of the Sculptors.”

Seamstress Cadmus also came up.

“Amazing Mr.Sculptor. You don't know how much I appreciate your sculptures.”

Weed spared them no favor, only because they could be useful to him.

“Although its not much, here is a gift.”

Weed handed Truman and Cadmus some small statues as souvenirs.

They were dazzling trinkets.

It was a simple commodity that would not sell for much. But it was all that was needed to buy the favor of an opponent. It was a trivial piece with no name , but it was still made by Weed.

Weed shared friendship with Pavo, Gaston, and other Production personnels who were part of the expedition.

Then Oberon came up to Weed and introduced himself as the leader of the Cold Rose Guild.

“I have some things I would like to ask.”

“What is it?”

Weed asked politely.

It's Weed's principal to determine their goal before trying to become friendly with them!

He had guessed that the purpose was the expedition.

Oberon said.

“We intend to occupy the Valley of Death with military force. But to be honest I don’t think it will be that easy. I wish for you to help us in this matter.”

“What can I help with?”

“A lot I hope, I’ll pay any cost. At the very least I’ll pay for the effects of the statue, to share it amongst us. That statue is very important for us.”

Oberon eyed the “Warm Lovers” statue.

The eyes of the Cold Rose guild members were filled with half envy and half admiration. Many of the higher levels tried many things to overcome the harsh environment but suffered, and here a simply Sculptor created a statue to do what they could not.

Weed was halfway dead from the cold, but the members of the expedition only saw a great Artist.

Working their way to their favorite Sculptor.

Artists that travel the continent making beautiful statues were highly respected.

Weed happily allowed this.

“ Its fine. Use the statue as much as you would like.”

“The price... How much will it be?”

"I don't need any. Meeting in a place like this must have been fate. We will cooperate fully."

“I cannot just take it. If you want anything tell me whenever.”

“No. I did not create this statue in the hopes of getting money so how can I ask for it?”

“But...”

Anyone who knows the usual Weed would never believe what was happening here.

Pavo and Gaston took this opportunity to glance sideways to send a signal to Weed, but it was ignored. He was looking nowhere but at Oberon.

Eventually Oberon nodded.

"I do not want to take it for free. It would be immensely helpful

to us. So how about this. I noticed that as a Sculptor you don't have wrist protectors. I will give you these ones."

Weed took the wrist guards as if he had no choice. He could not look at the item information while so many people were watching, but he could tell that it was made from rare material.

Weed then asked.

"There are level and job restrictions to wear this, right?"

Oberon kindly answered.

"The level restriction is 200 but it can be worn regardless of profession. It has good magic resistance and 2 properties. We obtained it from the Holden dungeon boss monster."

High class!

Weed smiled widely.

"Thank you for the wonderful gift."

Rare and unique class, depending on the properties each had the difference could be enormous. But Oberon was not the kind of person to wear luxury items if they were not good.

‘Holden Dungeon Boss monster? A rare monster that only appears once a month! And good drops don’t happen very often.’

Perhaps they discovered the dungeon before too many people knew about it and got good loot before the hunting picked up. It was Oberon’s policy to exchange things of equal value only.

‘I judged him correctly.’

Weed had very quickly analyzed Oberon.

‘A Righteous Warrior.’

He had a exceedingly good reputation known throughout the Royal Road. People assume that with good reputation, the person’s attitude is also righteous, however, it is often not the case. Oberon was one of rare people who lived up to the rumors.

Polite request!

In the Versailles Content, those who have the power, rule.

Even though he was just a Sculptor, he asked first rather than taking by force if need be.

Oberon was a loyal and respectful warrior.

For some people, it could be counterproductive if they acted in a roundabout way. Some people might try to negotiate, but end up bailing out. That's why most of the time, negotiations often lead to taking by force.

After analyzing the situation, Weed responded accordingly.

As a Sculptor, there were some skills that must be acquired!

To be able to sell goods for even 1 copper more helps greatly.

Weed wore the wrist protectors while smiling brightly.

“It fits well. Thank you very much.”

"One more thing, I have a question. What are you doing in this place?"

“Im.....”

Even if the central content was hot due to the curse, Oberon and the expedition found it weird for a Sculptor to be here.

“Wondering to many different places help awaken the soul of an Sculptor. Then in the midst of my travel, I received a request from a girl.”

“A request?”

“She asked me to plant flowers and trees in the Valley of Death.”

“Ah!”

Oberon, Drum, and Kerberos finally understood the sudden changes to the valley.

‘This person was doing a quest.’

A sculptor doing a quest in the North!

A quest to turn a barren land into something beautiful. Oberon asked about the quest’s difficulty rank.

“That’s the way it turned out. We will try to explore the Valley of Death. That is, if you don’t mind the expedition exploring this region?”

Weed answered his question with a soft smile.

“I am a professional sculpture and I have pride in my work. But I feel guilty about destroying nature.”

He broke a branch off a tree and started to make a sculpture from it. In order to save money Weed always used the base of a big tree

as he carved into it with his knife!

Weed showed the feelings of an artist who loved nature.

“Now all that's left is to plant some more trees and flowers. If you would get rid of the monsters it would make my job easier. And.... can we follow the expedition?”

“Follow us?”

“Yes. The expedition is heading deeper into the Valley of Death, correct?”

“Yes we are.”

“I would like to see the expedition fight bravely.”

“I would not recommend it. In case of an emergency we could not protect you....”

As Oberon said this, Drum elbowed him and sent a whisper.

Captain, I'll look after him. As far as i know he has not joined a guild, after he sees our guild in action we could take the chance to recruit him.

But I do not know of the danger that might await them. You may not be able to keep them safe.

It's alright. They aren't beginners. They can take a hit or two without dying.

But still...

Captain, your sense of responsibility is too strong. Do you want this person to feel rejected?

Kerberos the Wizard, noticed they were sending whispers to each other and intercepted by sending his own mini whisper.

Captain this person is already part of a quest in the north. Words can be dangerous, you cannot take them back.

The move was eventually left up to Oberon.

Oberon nodded.

“You may follow if you want, that's fine. But if there is an emergency we will not be able to guarantee your safety.”

“Thank you.”

With this Weed was able to ride along with the expedition.

As the expedition pressed farther into the Valley of the Dead he could plant the seeds, and he would be able to snatch the secrets of the Nifleheim Empire.

Weed, along with Alveron and Seoyoon, joined the support units in the back and followed the expedition.

The expedition was proceeding with haste.

“Move! Capture the Valley before nightfall!”

"Support units to the rear of the formation, Drill Scouts lead which way we should go!"

"Use protection magic, while Knights prepare to dominate the core area. Drive the monsters towards one side. Make sure to protect the Archer! Wizard prepare to cast a spell."

The expedition formed a spearhead and swiftly advanced. From the all the time they spend in the North they worked together well.

Assassins, Thieves, and Archers were paving the way forwards. Their mission was to trap and kill any monster they found.

“40 traps set. Preparations complete.”

“Go to the next area.”

“Come on, come on, let's go.”

Doreum was tolerable enough to handle scouting monsters and lead the way. But he was shocked to see a relatively large demanding monster.

The monster used Curse Spells to assassinate some players.

“Forward!”

“The enemies are now Lizard Soldiers, and Lizard Kings.”

“Wizards, suppressing fire. Attack!!”

“Uoooo”

The Knights spearheaded the attack.

They were holding shields and swords as they rushed towards the enemy. Weed had to admit these charging knights exerted a tremendous pressure.

Kwa-gwa-gwang!

Archers and mages fired heavily onto the enemies.

They were supporting the front lines.

Large explosive magic landed.

The wizard group in the center led by Oberon had a considerable size.

Dark Gamers and Cold Rose guild members participated in the expedition while the support Professions remained in the rear.

The monsters in the Valley of Death were slain in an instant.

Meanwhile the charismatic Weed went to the rear.

“There are newly planted plants spaced out back here. Please try to be careful!”

Pavo and the other Architects were digging in order to build. The Geomchis were also shoveling to plant the seeds. Even cooks who had nothing to do joined in.

Cadmus the Tailor and Truman the Blacksmith, who were famous all over the Continent joined in as well. They had received souvenirs from Weed, therefore could not afford to hang around.

“What the hell are you doing?”

Sometimes members of the expedition looked back at the priceless scene of nature. But the production classes in the back did not seem interested.

Weed followed the expedition and plated seeds along the way. Once planted they grew fast and started to bud.

Weed just finished planting all the seeds he had.

Ttiring!

Quest Complete: Plant Flowers. Seeds have been planted in the Valley of Death, to fulfill Prina's wish. The growth of the plants and trees will create a forest in the future.

Since ancient times, Dwarves and Elves have fought over the Valley of Death!

On the edge of the Valley lived a particular race. They made a Village for themselves and produced many things. But they never forgot to give thanks back to the land that provided for them.

Quest Reward: When you return to Morata Village you will be introduced to Prina's friend.

Quest Complete!

Now all that's left is the quest related to the lost honor of the Nifleheim Empire.

Weed's tension loosened.

'It took a little time to deal with the monsters, but the quest wasn't so difficult.'

They almost died due to the vicious cold. However thanks to the help of Tori, Seoyoon, Alveron and the others they were able to solve the quest.

He was also lucky to be able to travel along with the expedition.

Still his nervousness remained.

‘The expedition had been attacked by monsters countless times. If it hadn’t been for the expedition I would have had to waste 40 more days. But why were there so many monsters in this area?’

The expedition entered the Valley of Death.

Weed had visited the upper parts of both sides of this Valley! This was another whole area he had not been to.

“Humans. You dare step foot in here.”

“We are the ones who erased the Nifleheim Empire off the map.”

“Kyareureureureu! Kill the intruders!”

“Blood, Curse. Blood flow like a river through this valley.”

Suddenly Priests clad in black and monsters began to appear.

Using magic, the Priests commanded the monsters.

Alveron watched them grinding his teeth. It was the first time he made such unsophisticated reaction.

“Huh?”

"It's a bunch of Cultists who worship Evil Spirits! These Priests are devoted and faithful to the powers of evil and gained their strength by slaughtering the innocent. Each Church of the Continent have been long specified by the public. However, the Continent has excluded the Embinyu Church to prevent confusion. I would have never imagine them being in a place like this..."

Weed looked around.

Fortunately the expedition was so focused on the battle they seemed to not hear Alveron's story. The battle intensified as more Priests of Embinyu joined.

Seoyoon was close by. Close enough to hear Alveron's story.

"..."

But Weed did not worry about it. Because she was not a person who would carelessly run her mouth! In fact, so to say, she cannot speak at all, so she could not speak of it even if she wants to.

Weed remembered the words of the Necromancers from when he had fought the Legions of Undead.

The necromancer looked around and said.

“We necromancers have experienced great suffering throughout our lives. But now the misunderstanding will be cleared up, and we will be able to formally accept disciples and develop the Black Magic.

“I pray for success.”

“You’ve suffered because of our selfish request. In return, I’ll teach you one secret. Do you think that the Versailles Continent is actually peaceful?”

“Huh?”

“An unknown darkness builds around evil deep within the cities. The Church of Embinyu. There were 12 recognized leaders.”

“Leaders?”

“Based on the Church of Freya, the group have been hiding in the shadows, otherwise known as the Valhalla Temple. They believe in the Evil Spirit of Water, and they want the world to be covered in Darkness. Among those 12 Leader, one of them lived as the founder of Baseurin. It is peaceful during the day, but when the sky turns into night, a festival of Cultists unfold. The overall achievement

goes exactly as they wanted."

Baseurin is not safe. The Embinyu Church was more of a threat to the peace of Versailles Continent than the Legions of Undead.

'As far as the story goes, it seems like this might be Baseurin.'

It was a clue to a great quest. At least a hidden rank A or higher quest.

'Until now there has been no information of anyone having acquired on an S rank quest.'

Typically fame gained differed greatly depending on the quest. A quest that requires a great clue to get usually has a higher difficulty and better rewards.

'The land of Baseurin.'

Weed recalled the memories with ease.

This battle was much more difficult for the expedition. The Priests of Embinyu did damage constantly.

"Damn it. Where did those guys...."

"Protect them! No matter what, block it!"

Since coming here, the expedition was virtually unharmed but now about 10% of them had died.

The Scouts and Assassins were wiped out, and many Wizards were killed by the Priests of Embinyu because of their low Stamina.

“O gatekeeper of hell, descend here and cleanse the sinful!”

Embinyu Church’s summoners had arrived. A large number of monsters including summoned Cerberus damaged the expedition.

The expedition was embarrassingly on the verge of collapse.

Quickly mobilizing the Wizards at the beginning of the battle could inflict massive damage on the enemy. However the night before the battle after a long advance the Wizards’ mana was depleted.

Demonstrating that power at the beginning of the battle was impossible.

The priests were exhausted.

“Do not give up!”

“We have to destroy those guys!”

Oberon had the courage to move forward. Displaying the trust that as commander for his expedition not caring for his own life.

The allied guilds and Dark Gamers that had been watching the battle from the rear finally joined the fight. Aside from the Merchants, all combat profession and the Bards joined the battle.

As a result the Church of Embinyu's numbers slowly began to dwindle. The Knights that went through hell and the Rangers; one or two died to the Archers massive attack.

Weed's face relaxed but soon became serious again.

'This isn't enough to win. These are only the weak monsters and bosses.'

The Priests of Embrinyu were not everything. Weed was sure he had heard something. It was then.

At the end of the Valley of Death a huge shape of a shadow appeared!

A large pile of bones was rose from the ground.

The expedition members' jaws dropped at the sight. An unimaginable thing appeared.

A Dragon.

A dragon, the strongest creature on earth, after its death and being frozen into ice, it was revived with Dark Magic as an undead.

“I can not believe it!”

“I never thought there would be a Bone Dragon here.”

The Bone Dragon was an undead monster. A real dragon could not be compared with it. Nevertheless, there was no group that could say they had captured a dragon.

Padadadak!

The Bone Dragon stumbled as it flapped its wings. It was just as flippant as before. The Bone Dragon was over 400 meters long and the force created by simply flapping it's wings was enormous.

Hwi-ri-ri-ri-ri Hwi-ri-ri!

Wind raging through the bones made a strange sound.

A cold-blooded threatening noise!

You are in a state of fear.

Stunned temporarily

Agility reduced by 15%

Wisdom reduced by 30%

Fighting Spirit was lowered just by the dragon roaring.

“Whoa!”

Some people turned and tried to escape.

They did not want to die fighting the bone dragon.

It was understandable. However, Dragons were creatures who did not know how to show mercy.

The Bone Dragon unfolded its wings. Flying without hesitation it attacked the expedition.

With rotten teeth the bone dragon preemptively moved his body and neck and swallowed members of the expedition whole.

“Kkeu-a-ak!”

Knowing that the formation was on the verge of collapsing, Oberon shouted.

“Do not falter! Don’t give up! If you want to be a coward then run away! If you want to be a hero lift your sword and fight!”

Oberon led the charge to attack the Bone Dragon.

The monsters and Priests of Embinyu still remained, but it was imperative to restore the morale rather than deal with them.

“Follow the Guildmaster!”

“I will die with Guildmaster Oberon!”

The focus of the expedition became attacking the Bone Dragon with Oberon.

The Dragon faced an all out assault.

The Bone Dragon banged around as it charged!

The force was so great it cause the ground to shake.

Screams erupted as the big feet trampled over the expedition.

The Dragon’s act of battle was simple, but those who befell it were surely dead. Whilst to some extent the expedition and monsters were still fighting.

The Dragon opened it's mouth.

Weed noticed its behavior and knew what it was about to do.

‘Breath! It’s going to use its Dragonbreath.’

Because of Bingryong, he was able to guess what was going to happen. But the dragon was targeting the rear end of the expedition.

Puhwahahak!

A powerful acid like breath poured out like water.

Poison that melted everything!

Breath Spread wiping out Weed and all the others belonging Production Profession. Not one survived. Death awaited those who met the Dragon’s breath.

Architect Pavo didn't even try to dig a hole at the moment of his death.

“Attack!”

“Let us avenge our fallen comrades.”

The expeditions attacks became more heated. Yet the Dragon dealt enormous damage, whilst also have to fight the remainder of the other monsters.

More than 10 minutes had passed.

Peouseuseuk. Peouseuseuk.

Where lives were once lost, bones began to take form.

Skeleton Soldier!

Thanks to his power to deny death, Weed was reborn as a skeleton soldier.

Chapter 11: God of War Weed

The History of Versailles' Continent is KMC Media's most popular story.

Shin Hye Min concentrated on the program that held the interest of many Royal Road players.

“Yes, during today's program, we will be informing you of the prices of several the basic goods in each Kingdom. By the way, Oh Juwan, I've heard that you have something very important that you wish to tell us?”

“That's right. Many players have their attention focused on Bikeijeu Kingdom.”

“Why is that? What's happening there?”

“For example, there is a massive legion of monsters heading towards Bikeijeu Kingdom. These monsters came down from the Beurukei Mountains, their detailed travel route is unknown, but we are urgently gathering information.”

Anything befitting the Versailles Continent, they will even provide the most basic information. Information on prices, monster and travel routes of legions, they had it all.

If a novice was near a legion they would not be able to stop

trembling.

Tens of thousands of monsters were slaughtering people as they travelled.

For traders this was hell but, for Mercenaries, it was very good news. When you participate in a monster suppression quest given by Royal or Feudal Lords, the rewards and contribution points were tremendous.

Although many did not participate, there were many higher leveled Mercenaries that attended. It was an extraordinary experience to be able to watch the movement of monsters in battle.

Therefore, there was massive interest in urgently subduing the travelling monster army.

However, not many viewers were interested in the travelling Monsters heading towards Bikeijeu Kingdom.

"Yes, this will conclude our story of Bikeijeu Kingdom."

Shin Hye Min proceeded with the news broadcast quickly. She was well aware of what the viewers were all waiting for. On the host's monitor, she could see thousands of viewers commenting.

- When will that person be appearing on-air?

- When he appears, please ask him about the latest news.
- Please ask him about the Legions of Undead, and what item he acquired after defeating Tori.
- I am a level 380, one of the Maul Knights. My strength is a force to be reckoned with wherever I go. Can he keep up?
- I am a level 385 Monk and I want to at least watch him hunt. Please tell him.

These were the comments in the viewer section.

A few days ago, KMC media even released a trailer as an advertisement stating that they would do a telephone interview with the player who was famous in Continent of Magick and now in Royal Road.

Because of this, many people's interests flared, which resulted to doubling the usual view count. Even a skilled host like Shin Hye Min could not help from having her mouth dry.

"We have released a notice that today, we will have an interview with the person who has the character named "Weed". Once again, Weed was known to be the strongest and highest level in the Continent of Magick! With the Legions of Undead defeated, Weed was available for an interview."

"Really Shin Hye Min? I was skeptical when you said you were

going broadcast his interview, but is Weed REALLY going to appear?!"

Oh Juwan couldn't hide his excitement.

"Yes, it is true. We have already set up the telephone connection. It is all good to go."

"Of course. There is no other hero like Weed."

Oh Juwan had heard a lot of stories about Weed.

In one of the Continent of Magick's dungeon, it was known to be unconquerable, but he cleared it and even defeated the boss monster! This had become a legend.

Because he was able to conduct an interview with the very same Weed, Oh Juwan was bound to be glad.

The Production Director was looking at Shin Hye Min through the monitor, ready to type.

The phone call.

"Yes, then I will start the interview with Weed-nim."

Shin Hye Min did not waste any time. Too many people were

waiting for this.

In Royal Road, she would sometimes whisper Weed to have a conversation. Even still, she had times where she trembled because she was with the Weed that everyone talked about, how much more would other people be looking forward to this?

Hello?

The moment the voice came through the studio, hearts leaped.

- He came at last!

- Weed is speaking.

- The phone call with Weed went through!

For every 10 seconds, there was at least 100 comments. This shows how much people were concentrated on the broadcast.

Shin Hye Min effortlessly kept the conversation going.

“Hello, Weed-nim. During the course of the interview, I’ll be referring to you with your character’s name. Is that alright?”

-Yes.

Weed replied simply. Being called by his character name than by

his full name would be best. How much of a pain would it be to be remembered as the Princess Knight!

Oh Juwan is in the studio, please say hello to each other.

“This is Oh Juwan. It is an honor to talk to the highly renowned Weed.”

It’s a pleasure to meet you.

“Please greet the viewers.”

Hello there.

Lee Hyun replied succinctly.

Shin Hye Min’s insides burned.

‘His answers cannot be short like this!’

This was a broadcast. Viewers were definitely looking for a more smoother broadcast than this short one.

There were ways to read the script that the writers prepared before that would increase the dramatic effect, but this was not the case. A real time interview does not have any lines prepared beforehand.

Shin Hye Min asked while laughing.

“Weed-nim, is there any matter that is making your mood bad?”

Just a little bit.

“Yes? Is it because of me?”

Yes.

At this unexpected answer, Shin Hye Min and Oh Juwan were embarrassed.

When you do a interview you do not want to have the involved parties complaining. Although they had wanted it to remain that way, Lee Hyun did not reply did not comply.

‘This broadcast is a failure!’

Shin Hye Min felt sweat on her palms. However, she had to continue the interview.

“How would you like me to reply? If you want an apology, I'll apologize, if something needs to be fixed, I'll fix it.”

That is, is it okay to be like this?

Hmm?

You asked me to call you at 7 in the evening, but if you were going to hold an interview like this you should have called me. The

phone bill is so expensive.

"..."

The skilled host, Shin Hye Min was lost for words. Oh Juman, who was also lost for words, wasn't any help either.

They thought that it was some great inconvenience that the station would have to apologize for!

'He's so cheap!'

Only the frugal Lee Hyun could surprise them like this.

Soon, Shin Hye Min got a grip of herself.

"Yes, that was our fault. But we are very curious about Weed's action. First, selling your Continent of Magick's account. When it happened, the internet was in a huge uproar."

There was nobody who didn't know that Lee Hyun sold his Continent of Magick account.

At that time, the game was no longer as famous as Royal Road.

For many years, Continent of Magick was very popular, but it started going downhill as Royal Road became popular.

After purchasing his account, CTS media immediately halted the program which covered virtual reality games to hold a big event.

The items Weed had and even the records of him clearing the dungeons were broadcasted!

Because of there were still many who played Continent of Magick, this event gained high ratings.

Likewise, for the company who owned Continent of Magick, this was a huge help for them to try and overtake Royal Road.

Continent of Magick once again became very popular and in time, more and more famous accounts were sold to the media.

Shin Hye Min said it in a jealous way.

"I heard that when you sold your account, you earned a huge amount of whopping 3 billion won. That is a lot of money. Did you buy a foreign car with the money or bought something excessive?"

Lee Hyun's reply was very concise.

I no longer have the money.

"Yes?"

If you earn 3 billion today and you want to keep that 3 billion, you have to do so by working hard when tomorrow comes.

“Ah, those were really good words.”

Next to her, Oh Juwan asked a question.

“No matter how much money you have, it could not be compared with money you earned through accomplishment. Deep.”

It was true that Lee Hyun earned 3 billion. But at the same time, he lost it to loan sharks.

Because most people had the luxury of not knowing those circumstances, they misunderstood.

“Ok, then here is question #2 for Weed.”

Shin Hye Min was ready for a short answer, so she prepared another question.

“In the continent of magic, you leveled at a fast rate, outleveling everyone else. Is this true?”

Yes

“Could you perhaps share your secret?”

Hunt every single monster. Find a place where it is overflowing with monsters and kill them all.

Oh Juwan could not believe what he had heard.

“Weed, I also played Continent of Magic for a long time. But Weed’s growth was particularly exceptional, you sure you had no other tricks?”

It is because I hunted everyday.

“Wouldn't it have been boring, hunting? I can understand a couple monsters, but hunting for a couple hours gets boring no?”

I’ve never felt that way.

"..."

Lee Hyun said he never got bored of it. He replied well to Oh Juwan. Shin Hye Min asked the next question.

“Did you play Continent of Magic all day?”

Whenever I had free time, yes

"When you sit down and play, how long many hours did you play for?"

It is 204 hours.

"Pardon? The question was, how long did you sit down and play continuously."

Shin Hye Min and Oh Juwan thought he had misheard the question. But Lee Hyun heard the question correctly and gave his answer.

Would you be asking the longest time that I have played continuously?

“That’s correct.”

It is 204 hours long.

" ... "

The message boards were in an uproar.

- No way!

- It looks like he’s lying.

- How would anyone be able to play for 204 hours straight?

- I was a fan of Weed in Continent of Magick. Weed did not log off until he had cleared a dungeon once he entered it.

- Even so, there is no way I am trusting his words that he played for over 200 hours!

- His words just don’t make sense.

Shin Hye Min and Oh Juwan became embarrassed by their mistake.

It was an essential requirement for a host to tolerate whatever the interviewed person says. But after hearing this unbelievable statement her facial expression tighten. The message boards were heating up as well, making it unable to be ignored.

Eventually to recover from the awkwardness Shin Hye Min asked.

“Weed-nim, is it possible that you did not keep track of the time properly?”

I'm not mistaken. When I logged off the message said I had been playing for 204 hours straight.

“Oh did you mean you were logged on for 204 hours? Like if you were powered up your computer and left yourself logged on for 204 hours?”

Shin Hye Min was trying to make sense of his answer, but she wasn't able to.

No. I spent 204 hours inside the game.

" ... "

Shin Hye Min eventually became completely lost. Oh Juwan, who wouldn't stand the atmosphere, finally inquired.

“How is it possible for a person not to sleep for 204 hours and play a game instead?”

As for eating, you could eat in front of the computer. However, people needed to sleep.

Lee Hyun replied, recalling his experience.

If you play games, sleep can be overcome.

“How is that so?”

When you are hunting or doing quests, you are fully engaged, thus you do not become sleepy.

“Yes?”

In the beginning, I was really sleepy. But after 50 hours, sleepiness did not come easily. Even then, one hundred hours later, my eyes still stayed open, so of course I kept hunting.

"..."

It was a situation where I could no longer differentiate between playing the game and sleeping! However, one could continue playing without feeling sleepy or tired.

“204 hours of gaming. This seems to be the maximum a person can play continuously?”

No not at all. I only stopped because my mouse broke...

Shin Hye Min sighed a breath of relief.

‘We are normal.’

People pride themselves with playing for a day or two. But for Lee Hyun, staying up one or two night to play a game was child’s play.

Shin Hye Min then asked with anxiety.

“When you play games to that extent, do you properly eat your meals?”

No. There is nothing to eat at our house...

In fact there was not much food in the house.

But Shin Hye Min and Oh Juwan had different views on this.

‘I guess he couldn’t prepare and eat his meals because he was diligently playing the game.’

Oh Juwan asked in tone mixed with anxiety.

“How long did you play the game like that without sleeping?”

For about 3 years. I wasn’t only playing games. I was doing a variety of jobs, and played the game only when I had time.

Shin Hye Min asked carefully.

“Didn’t your body deteriorate somewhat?”

After not eating and sitting in a chair for so long, walking around became awkward. Should I say that my legs became atrophied? Since my body was hurting all over at the time, I make sure to thoroughly exercise now. It’s important to manage your fitness.

“They say that the I.C.U. patients who have been hospitalized for a long time have similar symptoms...”

It would probably be similar.

“...”

Other symptoms appeared after I washed my face.

“Washing your face?”

Yes. As soon as I washed my face the nose bleed...

“...”

I had no other choice but to spend some money and go to the hospital. There, the doctor told me something. He said that the ventilation from the fan was also dangerous if you spent too long playing games...

Shin Hye Min’s and Oh Juwan’s faces turned pale.

The Weed they called the God of War! They got a small glimpse at the reality of the crippled form.

To be continued...

Book 10: Treasures Of Nifleheim

Chapter 1: Skeleton Soldier Weed

Royal Road's website came up again and again. The first movie posted by the Cold Roses guild started.

"Look! It's the battle of the Northern Expedition."

After going into the Valley of Death from the white snowy fields, the fight started! The expedition had been fighting evil soldiers and servants, as well as Lizard Kings. The battle royal was going on in real time, uploaded by Oberon, a registered Hall of Fame user, but the responses were doubtful.

"Will we actually see some battling in the valley this time?"

"With nothing to hit, what are they even doing there?"

People had abandoned the expedition, only few lingered. The expedition was subjected to ridicule because for more than two months in Versailles Continent time, the only thing they did was wander around. However, people's reactions changed after the video progressed a little more. From the moment they entered the depth of the Valley of Death, the number of monsters that appeared increased exponentially. The identity of the expedition was still unknown, yet the Embinyu Priests stood before them, filled with feelings of rage, and casted their magic.

"So worth it"

"Fighting like that while whistling, as expected of the expedition led by a prestigious guild."

"Great tune."

As the expedition reached its end, surrounded by white snow and ice in the Valley of Death, the exciting last-ditch breakthrough attempt unfolded. Seeing real people fight in a thrilling action movie, you feel as though you have become one of them. While watching the video, the rumours people heard increased rapidly. The Hall of Fame's audience was always growing because it only takes a single moment to get people's attention.

"You mean you think it's related to the atmosphere?"

"Hey, wake up."

"Monster levels appear quite high. In the north, it's not uncommon for such strong monsters to appear in groups, this doesn't look good"

"Will it go right this time?"

People were dubious, yet they held their emerging hopes on the expedition.

"It's not the first time a courageous expedition has left to explore

the northern continent. Let's wait and believe."

"I hope you have a successful expedition."

"It's way too hot, I'm dying here. It's hard to move, sweat's even flowing from my forehead. Stamina is consumed too quickly."

"We can't go to places like cool dungeons or mountain-rivers because of the prestigious guilds occupying the areas."

"It's better for wizards and clerics to move less, they can't really survive like warriors."

The Versailles Continent was harder and hotter since the failure of the last A rank quest.

The value of hunting in dungeons and mountains skyrocketed. Stamina became much more difficult to preserve, and guilds fiercely fought wars to expand their area.

Meanwhile, people of course had to enjoy themselves and so tailors had a never before seen rush of bikini orders. Muscular men removed their black body armour and burned their clothes while enjoying the glamour of tanned women.

The scene in Royal Road changed.

As the festivities ended, there was a significant increase in people

swimming in rivers as people struggled to forget the summer heat by hitting the beach! Normally, if you wanted to relax and enjoy yourself, places could be found anywhere, but because of the crazy heat, they were rare. Crowds all gathered in river towns and seaside castles for the eye candy.

Even at the rivers, by noon you could no longer swim because of them.

Most people were forced to endure the heat. They were bound to be a little annoyed.

"I hope this expedition is successful."

"I really hope for the best too."

"Please make it"

People began to cheer for a successful expedition and a home return.

"But if they really succeed, what will happen?"

"Well, the Cold Roses guild will gain tremendous fame. They will also gather massive wealth and power from the new users flocking to join them."

"Will it really end that way? Oberon is a benevolent guy and

trusts his guild, but I imagine they are growing way too daring. Think of how reckless a challenge this is

"They could jump into the top 5 of the guild rankings though."

Below the video in the Hall of Fame, users posted their views.

Then someone posted an article.

It was a user with the nickname Chase. People knew him as a celebrity in Royal Road.

"About one month ago, in the middle of a quest, I heard the story from a pub owner."

Everyone focused on what Chase wrote.

"Chase-nim?"

"The high-level user ranked in the top 100? He normally doesn't write here, what the hell is going on?"

After stimulating the curiosity of a bunch of relaxed viewers, he finally posted:

I heard a simple story.

'To create the continent's cool weather again, you must acquire the things the Witch presented to the altar of the God.'

Edereune God's altar. I investigated by reading the history of the Versailles continent for information about witches. As a result, I found the records of the Serbian Ice Witch.

The Broken Beads of the Witch.

Through the information I learned from the history of the Versailles continent, the beads are in an unknown location in a valley... and from what I have heard, it seems that the expedition is probably battling around that place.

Chase's article was like pouring oil onto a roaring fire.

"The expedition is at the place where the broken beads of the Serbian Witch can be found!"

"Chase said the expedition's battle is associated with the heat in the Versailles continent!"

"The quest to blow the heat away from the Versailles continent is finally in progress?"

The Broken Beads of the Serbian Witch was a kind of item that corresponds to accessories.

It is known for its special power of manipulating the surrounding climate, but it constantly eats away your life. Unless you are a master wizard specializing in ice, just touching the cursed item will freeze your body.

The spotlight was focused on the Hall of Fame as the video came up.

All professional stations -including KMC Media and CTS Media- interrupted regular news broadcasts to show the video. The real-time news was not to be missed; its purpose was to tell exactly what the big issue in the Versailles continent was.

The TV screen showed the expedition finally venturing deep into the Valley of Death.

Then something gigantic emerged.

One of the most powerful undead creatures, the Bone Dragon!

With every roar of the Bone Dragon, the earth underneath already shaking feet trembled.

Kuah ahang!

"Damn! Run!"

"Divide the party!"

"Don't stick close to the wall! Ice blocks will fall from above!"

The expedition fell into disarray.

Bone Dragons have never once appeared before, let alone been hunted.

It is usually much easier to fight in the plains. You can put your feet on the life filled earth and stay steady until the enemy is defeated.

But here, the ground is made of slippery ice, making it very unstable. To make matters worse, whenever the Bone Dragon moved, the earth shook.

"Knights, please clear the rocks!"

"Damn it! It's so difficult to keep balance!"

Swordsmen, knights and warriors ran off with their swords, dislodging the ice every time they slipped and fell. No matter how strong the thrust was, it could be easily stopped by a twisted foot.

Complaints burst out across the expedition.

"Stand united, together we will have a better shot at killing it. Wizards, attack with magic!"

"Damn it ... can't use magic! The body's not listening due to the Bone Dragon's roar."

Roar of the Bone Dragon. Dragons are peerless. They inflict psychological pressure on inferior creatures!

Even if thousands of animals such as foxes gathered, they would end up lying on the ground, dead.

The mentality of the magicians got disturbed with fear of the Bone Dragon.

Magic failed. Mana reflux.

A number of hands started shaking. Words did not come out properly. More than nine tries failed in succession.

"Fireball wave! Keuaaag!"

While trying to attack, the wizard's magic failed and his body caught on fire, burning him afterwards.

Such a sight made the mouths of wizards freeze.

"Oh my god. What in the world....."

"Never seen that monster before."

The Bone Dragon's level was known to be in the late 400s.

Many users in the expedition had a level in the late 300s. It had incredible strength for a difference of only about 100 levels.

Significantly higher levels reveal greater gaps in power.

Furthermore, the Bone Dragon was one of the large boss monsters able to fly and use magic!

Because of these reasons it was an even more difficult opponent.

"Stupid human race!"

The Bone Dragon was communicating.

A body made only of bones.

The area where eyes should be shined a dark blue glow.

"This will be everyone's grave!"

Whenever the Bone Dragon roared, the ice spontaneously ruptured.

"Behold your sanctuary!"

The wings folded over the large body spread wide out.

Parararak!

The Bone Dragon unfolded its bony wings.

Its broad wings completely covered the Valley of Death.

The Bone Dragon majestically soared into the sky. It reversed directions and descended, all the while using its feet to pick people up and its head to swallow them.

"Oh shit."

"We're trapped. We're all going to die!"

Despair filled the eyes of the young users that believed in the Cold Roses guild and followed the expedition.

Bone Dragon!

They were legendary mythical creatures fought against in ages past.

But Cold Roses was a rather ambitious guild and went straight

into the fire without a glance at the frying pan. The guild alliance had not lost any of their will to fight.

"It is a Bone Dragon."

"A golden opportunity to hunt one."

Bone Dragons have not yet once been hunted.

The reason was not because they were invincible, but rather Bone Dragons were never seen in the continent until now. They are very rare in nature, making them hard to encounter.

Usually, as soon as boss monsters over level 400 appeared in dungeons, guilds joined together into hunting groups to dominate.

In the end, the Bone Dragon is just a monster!

"Forward!"

"Sacrifices are necessary to take him out! Otherwise, it is pointless for us to be here."

The expedition led by Oberon marched towards the Bone Dragon and tackled it.

Kureureureung - kwangkwang!

The Bone Dragon used a fire spell and exploded the ice. Swordsmen, knights, warriors and paladins bravely rushed right through it.

"Keuaaaa!"

Roar of the Bone Dragon.

Unhindered landslides of snow and ice occurred on the hills of the Valley of Death.

"Wizard forces, attack with magic! Use whatever's necessary to take down the Bone Dragon!"

Following Oberon's command wizards put their lives on the line.

"I collect all the mana here"

"Bright burning fire shall"

"Rage against the enemy and strike."

"Mana burn!"

Wizards used all their mana at once for their magic attacks.

After mana depletion, you would take a long break before using magic again, but the situation was urgent.

The ground of ice was divided and snow and ice poured down from the cliffs on either side. In this confusing situation, there was a need for a strong blow to the Bone Dragon.

Pillars of light generated by wizards flew in unison toward the Bone Dragon and exploded.

Many wizards lost their lives due to their magic failing, but it was a necessary sacrifice.

Kkwaahahang!

The Bone Dragon flying in the sky crashed to the ground, shattering the ice ground significantly as it got stuck upside down at its destination.

"Now."

"Now is our chance."

"Before it is able to fly again."

"Attack!"

The warriors of the expedition rushed toward the fallen Bone Dragon.

"Keuooooo!"

The Bone Dragon brandished its tail to protect itself.

"Strike!"

-Cried Oberon as he bravely jumped with his stocky body. With 2 sharp rotations in the air, he slammed the body of the Bone Dragon with his hammer.

That single strong pound attack was filled with the power of Oberon.

"Wing Smash!"

Only great warrior skills create enough damage for a chance at stunning the opponent!

As a large monster, the Bone Dragon was nearly immune to physical stun attacks.

Nevertheless, the damage went beyond its threshold.

Other swordsmen, warriors, knights, and paladins approached

the Bone Dragon and began hacking away.

"Straight cut!"

"Smite!"

"Holy Attack!"

Nearly 200 high-level users held on to attack. Rain had soaked their clothes, forcing them to go step by step to strike the Bone Dragon as it moved its huge body, but the warriors at the forefront resisted the attack from its body.

Priests with poor Stamina were busy repeating their cycle of restoring declining health.

The spirit of the other members of the expedition started to rise up.

Non allied guilds stood alongside the Cold Roses guild, nevertheless, those courageous enough to come along to the north fought with as much strength possible.

"Killing the Bone Dragon will be hard, but we can handle the rest of the monsters after it."

"The evil priests, soldiers and followers are our responsibility."

The expedition started to eradicate some of the monsters, starting a melee inside the Valley of Death.

Oberon shouted.

"Drum!"

"Yes, sir!"

"How much more do we have to hit?"

"I'll check it out."

Drum swiftly slid straight down the ice to the bottom while trying to cast magic at regular intervals.

"Bursting with vitality, show me everything. View Life Force!"

The magic revealed the monster's status and remaining life.

In front of Drum, the Bone Dragon's status was displayed.

Tiring!

Bone Dragon KurenbereuSinister spirit could not forsake the power of hatred and was revived as an undead. Originally a savage Red Dragon, since turning into an undead it became even more

berserk.

Health: 74%

Mana: 12%

"Keoeog!"

Drum was breathtakingly surprised.

While hitting the Bone Dragon, Oberon excitedly asked.

"How much left?"

"Still 74% left."

"What?"

"The Bone Dragon's life is tremendous. We've got a long way to go before it dies."

Until now, only about one quarter of its health was decimated!

As expected of a large monster, the Bone Dragon took pride in its

enormous life force.

*

Weed struggled free to find something out of place. He was both energetic and light in his body and legs.

"This is?"

Weed was shocked after looking down at his body. Bony skeleton ribs with neither flesh nor muscle attached anywhere.

"Did I turn into a skeleton?"

Skeleton soldier.

After being fed to the boss and dying, he turned into an Origin of the Skeleton.

Weed recalled the past.

When he completed the quest to destroy the Undead Legion, he gained the power to reject death.

The Bone Dragon's breath blew away all his health and he was reborn as a skeleton.

"I have more urgent matters."

Weed took comfort in confirming that Alveron and Seoyoon were still alive.

The Bone Dragon's breath, despite sweeping throughout the cave, did not spread to Seoyoon because she had already decided to wait and save her energy to fight monsters later.

Alveron was also fortunately still all right.

Priests, merchants and other production jobs gathered together to see if they could accomplish anything.

Every time Alveron elevated his skill levels, the Church of Freya's public values rose. Through his blessing and treatment of the expedition at the place where priests gathered, he was able to obtain many thanks.

Weed whispered to Alveron through the created party.

"Alveron."

Alveron was busy treating the injured people around him yet he immediately reacted to Weed due to their familiarity and listened closely.

"Hi Weed, you're alive. I thought you were dead."

"Thank to Goddess Freya that I was able to rise again due to the ability of the Necromancer. This could not have been possible without having the blessings of the Goddess."

"All according to the will of the Goddess of harmony."

"All according to the will of the Goddess of harmony."

They splashed flattery at each other to establish a sense of respect. To be the target of flattery meant you were useful.

Flattery came out spontaneously from Weed to compensate for his disadvantage.

After being changed into an undead, it was pointed out that his familiarity with Alveron, the priest from the Order of Freya, would be reduced.

As his familiarity with Alveron was below a certain level and he had turned into a skeleton, confidence in him was low. Alveron, however, accepted Weed as he was.

"Rather Alveron, I command you. In the Valley of Death, stop all treatment and support activities."

"Yes, I shall follow your words Weed."

"First, carefully come to the back unnoticed."

In the midst of the battle, Alveron left from the back of the group.

Even for clerics and wizards that took a lot of breaks separately to replenish mana through meditation, it was the picture of suspicion.

Weed spent some time whispering to Geumini.

"Geumini."

"Master. Golgolgol!"

"Come with Wyvern 1 and take Alveron to the hiding place."

"Understood master!"

Weed mobilized Geumini and a Wyvern to take Alveron to a safe location.

'Cause I turned into a skeleton, divine power no longer works on me.'

In addition, he wanted to drop Alveron in a place safe enough from the fighting.

"Keuag!"

"Block their magic curses!"

"Start taking care of the priests."

The priests and monsters of the Embinyu Church.

Due to the roar of the Bone Dragon, they took control of the Valley of Death.

Alveron might be endangered from the blindly executed attacks. If Alveron died, not only would the quest fail, but worst would be the loss of friendship with the Church of Freya. The risk of losing experience and skill levels was also tremendous.

Not until Alveron was safe in the rear could Weed finally afford to breathe.

"Stats Window!"

Character Name: Weed

Status: Undead

Level: 319

Job: Origin of the Skeleton

Health: 35,080

Mana: 28,210

Strength: 1050

Agility: 969

Vitality: 713

Wisdom: 663

Intellect: 655

Fighting Spirit: 598

Stamina: 497

Endurance: 406

Charisma: 387

*Power to reject death is currently enabled.

Skills usable in the undead state are dependent on the skill level of the power to reject death.

However, for the first eight beginner levels, skills will be given.

Stats were changed.

Health, mana, strength and agility had increased abnormally.

"It's a characteristic of the job."

As Weed spoke, his jaw was seen moving.

Art, leadership, luck and faith were lost, and instead the basic combat stats went up significantly.

-Holy natured Tallock's Armor made by the Church of Freya is best not worn in an undead state. The created body is rather weak to it.

"Items off."

Weed took off Tallock's Armor and put it in his backpack. He then removed all the other equipment the undead couldn't wear as well.

Although his well-trained intermediate blacksmith skill lowered the limit to equip things, they needed a status other than undead in the first place.

"It's better not to use things with the good properties."

There were not many particular things to wear besides the armour of the Church of Freya. Weed instead rummaged through his backpack for some other things.

Saint's Staff!

One of the things dropped by the Lich Shire.

Tiring!

Saint's Staff equipped. The property of the staff changes according to the undead property. The real power of the staff shall be revealed. You can use black magic.

After equipping the Saint's Staff, dark energy spread rapidly through the remaining bones in Weed's body.

"Identification!"

Saint Taranhan's Staff

Durability 90/90. Damage 79-98.

The great saint revered by humans received a dawn ring with a hidden secret, demons could be heard from within. Saint Taranhan enjoyed blood, carnage and corruption! Nestled among his bribes was a powerful magical staff.

Restrictions: Dark series job.

If worn by a priest or paladin, power of the staff varies.

Options:

-600 Faith

-200 Charm. +100 Stamina.

+80 Intellect. +100 Wisdom

35% increase in spell damage.

Reduced stamina consumption in rugged terrain.

Notoriety rises by 30 for every human killed.

Devoted living sacrifice can restore health and mana.

Black magic is available.

In the hands of the wicked, evil forces will further ascend.

The undead status awakened the real power of the Fallen Saint's Staff!

Weed was significantly satisfied.

"Too bad the world's about eating and living well. When various good young men are being used by others, hatred is destined to accumulate."

He who strikes first wins.

Hit even more with devious tricks.

Especially if they are sleepless.

Guys wealthier than most!

Non applicable gem like sayings.

The world is too fast to live straight up.

Weed had a few more wearable items.

"Identification!"

Necromancer tome directly written by Bar-Kahn

:

Durability 30/30

The second written tome dealing with the difficult discipline of black magic that manufactures undead. All undead recipes ranging from basic level to advanced level are listed. Written directly by the genius wizard Bar-Kahn, it is not difficult to understand.

Dealing with the creation of undead requires a huge mana supply and cannot be carelessly used.

Restrictions:

Wizard Job. Level 300. Wisdom 500. Mana 8000

Only available to Necromancer job.

Options:

Resistance to black magic +25.

Ability to manufacture undead +2.

Can make undead bosses with intelligence.

Vitality of the undead will improve and immunity to divine power will be built up.

"Not bad."

Origin of the Skeleton.

Thanks to the balanced characteristics of Skeleton Warriors and Skeleton Mages, Necromancer magic could be equipped and read.

Numerous spells were written in red.

It contained a bunch of Necromancer magic. In addition to undead manufacturing magic, many magic attacks were also written.

Weed first read about Bone Dragon manufacturing magic.

Easy undead recipes directly written by Bar-Kahn.

Bone Dragon:

The ultimate undead all wizards want to see and create.

Dead body of a Dragon is required and many magical reagents must be committed. In contrast to zombie or ghoul like monsters that instantly appear, one hundred time-consuming days are required to generate it. Magic defence and intellectual ability are significantly dropped compared to a normal Dragon, but the bodily ability to take advantage of is the health increase. However, the weaknesses of the Bone include...

Weed zealously read the magical book.

Chapter 2: Origin Of The Skeleton

KMC Media told the story of the Versailles continent.

Shin HyeMin and Oh Juwan's job in the program broadcast was to tell the latest information.

"Mr. Oh Juwan, you told me that if certain conditions are met and special quests are done, something specific would happen?"

"Yes. Unicorn Company reportedly said: 'in the case of production jobs, after their skills reached a certain state, they can embark upon a unique generated quest'."

"The quest isn't like the primary 3?"

"It's a little different from them, for example, in the case of blacksmiths they can operate their own studios as a reward."

"Even jewellery workshops?"

"Yes, on the basis of accumulated technology, their own studios can be opened. It is also possible to employ operators."

Until now, blacksmiths were only able to erect castles for kings, lords and nobles. The blacksmith was a form of employment run by others.

After acquiring skills to a certain extent, blacksmiths can forge under their own name and create their own story.

"In the future, towns and countries will want more workshops to improve the speed of technological development. Production jobs appear to be the hope of the future."

"It's a positive thing. Many people with production jobs can now go out and dream."

"Returning back to the story about job quests ... we do not know specifically what will happen with the generated quests. For example, I have heard of the blacksmith quest that allows for the creation of studios as well. There are just so many alternatives for job related quests that I advise people to never give up."

Oh Juwan explained while sweating. He had been reading from the script for nearly two hours.

"That's right, what would happen if those job skills are mastered Mr. Oh Juwan?"

"Unicorn Company, in a private interview, reportedly said people are close to crossing that line. Such a person has yet to appear though. Royal Road is a game very large in nature. Furthermore, it is based on the physicality of reality. When you think about it, mastering a skill is very difficult."

"But if they master job skills, will they get something?"

"Great fame, and if they belong to a kingdom, I would guess that they get a title."

Oh Juwan tried to proceed with an ordinary expected remark, but Shin HyeMin did not miss his expression change.

"We have been broadcasting together for over a year Oh Juwan, do you know you have a habit of blinking whenever you try to hide something."

"Haha, yeah?"

"Please let us know what's going on right now."

"Here's the truth. Well"

Oh Juwan smiled albeit embarrassed and quietly talked.

"It doesn't end when they master their profession."

"It's not the end? Once skills have been mastered, they have reached the final stage of the production process, is that not it?"

"No. It is said that at that time, there will be a new beginning. Their given skills will be used for something related to the

continent. For those jobs to carry out their master quests, they must form parties able to break information reminiscent of the main story of Versailles continent. As far as I can tell, quests have had no association with races ... until now. I really do not know any more than this."

"It's a lot more fun when things just come out."

"I'm sure you would think that. I'm still a while away from mastering my job; I still make mistakes with it."

"Job skills during the high growth period are very difficult to level. Thank you for telling me."

"I had the honour of talking to the beautiful Ms. Shin HyeMin; I am the one who should be thankful."

"Oh, I appreciate the compliment. That reminds me, today I ate the fruit you brought for me."

"I will have to buy more fruit when I go home today then."

Shin HyeMin and Oh Juwan were now ready to shut down the broadcast. Part 1 was inviting people from the panel to talk to. Part 2 was telling them the information they had. The broadcast that lasted for over two hours was finally ending and it was time to rest.

'I should go out with Pale-nim and have fun.'

Shin HyeMin followed the scenario and prepared for the moment to shut down the broadcast. Suddenly, the PD signature for a broadcast extension shined.

'Isn't now time to end this thing?'

The appearance of the TV screens mirrored the sudden fight of the expedition in the Valley of Death. Battle of the Northern Expedition was linked in real time.

Oh Juwan was in a panic, but Shin HyeMin quickly responded.

"Viewers, it is our pleasure to try and give you the stories of Versailles Continent. Timely and accurate broadcasts! Without ending the broadcast, we will send you the news as soon as it comes in."

Oh Juwan had learned how to adapt to fast-paced situations. By looking at the contents of the illuminated TV screen, he guessed it was related to the expedition so he quickly gave an explanation.

"Before the people in the audience, what we will tell you is never before heard information about the expedition in the north. The expedition led by Oberon, its Captain, seems to have finally entered the Valley of Death."

Oh Juwan boasted of an extensive network in Royal Road.

Through good fortune, he was acquainted with the prestigious Oberon, allowing him to hear news about the expedition directly from him.

Shin HyeMin and Oh Juwan read what was written in the PD just then and told the story through their headphones.

"Chase told me the news. Currently in the valley where the expedition entered, there is a very high probability that the Broken Beads of the Serbian Witch are there! The Serbian Witch's Broken Beads will blow away the current heat in the main continent."

Shin HyeMin and Oh Juwan's fatigue from the 2 hour long broadcast was gone.

Like anyone else that liked Royal Road, giving new information to viewers filled the two with a sense of pride.

Shin HyeMin opened fire first.

"The expedition is on an adventure to find the Serbian Witch's Broken Beads! It's currently being streamed in real time. Regardless of the broadcast time, the story of the expedition's adventures in Versailles continent will continue until the end for our committed viewers."

The broadcast was to last till dawn to show the viewers what they wanted. The story about the Versailles continent had already become the top priority in the timetable in the station. If

necessary, hours of the show would be extended on top of any other program!

Shin HyeMin and Oh Juwan saw the base of the Valley of Death on the viewing screen created from the chunky dwarf Oberon's adventure.

The bloody fight of the expedition.

As they battled against evil looking Priests of the Embinyu Church and hordes of monsters, the Bone Dragon was flying around in the sky eating the expedition.

All these things appeared through the dwarf Oberon's vision.

Shin HyeMin thought to herself.

'Pale-nim's gotta see this.'

All users were sensitive to information about Royal Road. The very rare quest occurrence that could quickly lead to the outbreak of war, millions of people were watching. Within just a few minutes, there was an explosive growth in ratings, crowds of tens of thousands gathered on the street in front of large television screens.

In fact, for Shin HyeMin and Oh Juwan, it did not matter how long the broadcast took. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves because it was about Royal Road!

Shin HyeMin said her expectations.

"Well, I hope the expedition takes out the Bone Dragon and acquires the Broken Beads of the Serbian Witch."

Oh Juwan nodded.

"Seems possible. The Cold Roses guild is not alone and there are a lot of outstanding users in the expedition."

"I am guessing that the expedition primarily formed for the reward. But Mr Oh Juwan..."

"Yes?"

"How powerful is the Bone Dragon?"

"The Bone Dragon is a very powerful monster. Only guilds that dared to enter dangerous monster zones would be able to tolerate it. When walking alone at night, if you meet it, run right away."

"I can only imagine how terrible it would be to meet a Bone Dragon at night."

At night in the Versailles continent, monsters grow stronger by 50%, therefore reducing the number of emerging monsters that people were capable of hunting. People usually tended to take a

break from monster hunting at night.

In the first place, hunting a boss class monster at night was no different from a suicidal act. The items and experience rewarded were not necessary, considering all the risk present.

Then on the screen, they listened as it showed the Bone Dragon's torso on the ground, studded with axes.

Dwarves threw them like firewood with an unrelenting hand!

Shin HyeMin excitedly made two fists.

"Hopefully, the efforts of those who struggled in the expedition will end in success."

"Yes. Wizards are getting ready to cast large spells again. They appear to be targeting the body of the Bone Dragon."

"I think it's a massive Fire Field."

"The kamikaze attack led by the wizard Drum has been launched!"

And so Shin HyeMin and Oh Juwan explained the fight like a football game broadcast.

*

Weed was also watching the expedition fighting the Bone Dragon.

'A Bone Dragon. Certainly stronger than Tori.'

Tori was a Vampire Lord. The Vampire power of transforming someone into stone was a very strong and destructive magical attack.

But the Bone Dragon, as a large monster, literally trampled over numerous members of the expedition. It was relative to an elephant versus a group of ants.

"They will be used to the fullest, keukeukeu."

Weed scored a wicked smile.

He won much when the expedition perfectly ignored him as his job was a sculptor!

‘The misfortune of others is my happiness!’

Although Oberon recruited a few other people including Weed, he gave preferential treatment to his guild.

Most of the terrible battles were won, but the expedition ignored the sculptor department.

It had become common for production jobs workers that made weapons and armours to be ignored. Even for those with high level skills, only a little respect was shown and what did not essentially change was that people only looked for them when they needed something. The labour force workers just wanted money so they could eat at any time.

It goes without saying that production and art series jobs were at least sometimes useful in treatment.

While cooks, sculptors and architects assisted the expedition crew, the fundamental change recognized was not enough.

The currently slain production and art series jobs revealed that fact to be true.

Weed recalled the time the Bone Dragon's breath flooded the chambers.

"They could have provided full protection."

The priests and wizards had time to spread defensive magic around. Quite a few production series jobs including the cooks and merchants would have lived if they had done so. Weed had the advantage of monstrous health and would have survived somehow, but no one was protected by magic.

"We were not worth saving."

Consuming mana to keep countless people alive who would not directly help in the battle would end in annihilation. Since they didn't need to keep giving assistance, they could concentrate more on distributing power for fights.

It was not attributed to the wizards or the clerics' decision but rather Oberon's judgement at the time. Still, Weed did not blame him.

In the first place, that's how the world is.

"The Bone Dragon's pretty strong too."

The Bone Dragon struck the earth, increasing the martyrs of the expedition.

A dangerous situation!

The Geomchis' and Dark Gamers executed surprising plays.

"Honey, I'm hurt!"

Volk went through the gaps of the Embinyu Priests while brutally wielding his Great-sword.

"Hang in there baby. We can't meet our end here!"

Lin Der treated her husband and the other Dark Gamers.

The Dark Gamers, rather than recklessly tackling the Bone Dragon, dealt with the monsters, steadily reducing the enemies.

Each of the Geomchis were also scattered throughout.

"These guys!"

"Taste this!"

Thanks to the improved attack and defence via Weed's sword grind and armour polish skills, the Geomchi were now able fight evenly against the monsters.

Other people also noticed it was not normal.

"It's dangerous Geomchi 350!"

"Yow!"

Geomchi was not surrounded by monsters. By thoroughly analyzing the situation, he showed only the most optimal movements.

He faced only the scattered monsters and overwhelmed each of them.

Geomchi individually battled each of them, even without the support of a wizard or priest!

Weed nodded his head.

"At this rate, the Bone Dragon will be finished off without a hitch."

No matter how strong a monster was, it could not take on all the forces of the expedition.

In the icy northern continent red blood flows through the valley. The unwelcomed Bone Dragon will never stop the advance of heroes.

The people listened to the voice of bards as they took songs to new heights.

Dancers danced accordingly. Sometimes they slipped and fell on the ice, but even then they did not stop dancing.

Bards received assistance from the dancers.

Shamans', summoners' and elementalists' were each dedicated to

their own missions.

The expedition took heavy losses, but appeared to be winning the battle itself.

"While dealing with the monsters, they encountered the Bone Dragon. Roughly half died, but it still wouldn't be that hard to win."

Weed decided not to intervene until the end of the fight.

The Geomchis were not people who would die in this battle, their lives were based on taking care of their bodies, and therefore, there was no need for Weed to go.

"Anyway, I can't just embark with this body."

His appearance was currently changed into a skeleton.

To be mistaken for a monster would not be at all unusual in this situation!

Also, the magic treatment of priests would bring adverse effects. Therefore, it would be good to be hidden from the eyes of the expedition.

Weed concealed himself and simply watched the situation unfold.

"But what is that woman doing?"

Seoyoon strangely caught his eye.

Even when the enemy of life, the Bone Dragon appeared, she kept dragging her sword to the forefront of the expedition.

While the barbaric Oberon withdrew his forces to an extent, Seoyoon viciously attacked with ongoing momentum.

The berserker characteristic of continuous attack was applied to the Bone Dragon.

She sustained numerous injuries while fighting at the forefront, all the while causing the battle to erupt into more chaos.

It was then that the situation reversed itself.

Monsters were reduced to some extent when a big calamity took place within the expedition.

Part of the expedition aimed their swords at the back of their colleagues.

"Keueok!"

"Why all of a sudden"

"We are on the same side. Stop attacking!"

"Priests dispel the seduced status. Come on, hurry up and cast the divine magic!"

They knew they had to use divine magic on their colleagues caught in the seduction magic from the sacred writings of the Embinyu Priests.

Meanwhile, people in the expedition did not stop attacking. Those caught up in defending died.

Priests burst out screaming!

"The removal magic's not working!"

"They are still attacking our allies!"

It was not the monsters that dazed people.

Betrayal at the decisive moment!

Tero Seu of the Crimson Wings Guild was holding his sword inverted.

All this time, the Crimson Wings Guild had been patiently waiting. They purchased appropriate equipment, namely special face changing items, armour and swords.

Then at the crucial moment, they revealed their true form.

Terose's disguise changed back into his original armour and the figure drawn on his face was removed.

"We scoured this cold land in search of the Bone Dragon!"

Flavio, the barbarian warrior next to Oberon immediately intercepted him.

"Keueuk! Why"

"For our Crimson Wings, it can't be helped. We will take care of the Bone Dragon, but worry not. Your role won't be in vain."

Flavio slashed deeply into Oberon.

A fatal blow!

Oberon's nerve was not prepared for the sudden outbreak of civil war in the expedition during the battle with the Bone Dragon. His injured, defenceless colleagues met a complete end.

Unlike his usual character, Oberon was extremely outraged.

"Until now you have been waiting to go rogue!"

"You people should not have been tricked. Just because we belonged to the expedition, didn't mean we shared the same goal."

"Cowards, I will not go down like this"

As expected of a strong warrior, Oberon tried to stand his ground, but then a shadow rose from his back.

"This will definitely kill you."

Fear swept over his face as he glanced at the assassin Dane as he struck with his dagger.

Assassin's fatal blow!

Paralysis of the body!

Poison has spread rapidly throughout the body.

If you do not stop the bleeding wound, health will continue to decline.

Dane's poison dagger was buried in him. Oberon could not move

his paralyzed body.

The eyes of Flavio and Dane met.

"If he recovers, all that trouble will be for nothing."

"All that's left is to finish him then."

Flavio and Dane kept striking with their weapons. They gathered near the Bone Dragon and finished Oberon off in a joint attack.

With his body paralyzed, Oberon could not withstand both of their attacks.

"Cowardly bastards! I will have my revenge someday!!!"

Oberon vowed revenge and died.

The expedition was notified of the death of Oberon.

"The captain is dead."

"Damn traitors killed our captain. They must pay for this!"

The expedition fell into a state of disarray. A fierce battle erupted between Oberon's allied guild forces and Terose's hired mercenaries.

Terose did not directly participate in combat and instead went to the place where the Dark Gamers gathered together.

'They move for money anyway. Even though Cold Roses is a larger guild, we just need to offer to pay them.'

Crimson Wings Guild was officially gone, but instead of reasonably finding a new place, they remained attached to their legacy.

"Volk, I want to contract you."

Terose looked for Volk among the Dark Gamers.

King Bersos' Tomb. They became acquainted while participating in the difficult Rank A quest together.

"We stand here before you with a purpose. We will pay you if you come and help us instead of the expedition. If you want, we are even willing to give you half of the items from the Bone Dragon."

Terose believed Volk and the Dark Gamers would accept the offer. Lives for money, they recruited people to die at any time for money. Rather than vague feelings of friendship, the mercenaries were faithful to reality!

But Volk shook his head.

"I'm sorry, I cannot do so."

"Why not? Do you have a problem with my proposal? We are suggesting a contract with better conditions than Oberon's."

"I am sorry. I got an advance."

"Seriously....."

Chapter 4 of the Law of Dark Gamers.

Take the money, keep the promise. No matter how many benefits there are to reap, you must absolutely fulfill the contract.

Most people do not know that when Dark Gamers take money, they do not break their contract.

When a group has an incredibly low reputation, they cannot earn money, therefore, for the benefit of the Dark Gamers a rule was implemented.

The moment you accept the contract, you promise not to abandon it.

Being told they would not act accordingly when presented with money sounded like a bunch of crap to Terose.

A grimace appeared on his face.

"We can give more than 2 times the amount they promised. No we will pay you 3 times as much."

"I'm sorry but we can't. We are bound to the contract. When the contract expires, then we can help, but not now."

The Dark Gamers were unable to accept Terose's offer.

"Keuoooo!"

Meanwhile, the Bone Dragon and monsters became increasingly active in attacking.

The expedition could no longer concentrate as the senior users were busy fighting among themselves.

Regardless, the Dark Gamers observed neutrality and fought monsters, but they were unable to block everything.

"Kiyoooh! Humans, kill them!"

"Believe in evil. Ride Evil!"

Although wounded, the Bone Dragon and monsters released

vicious attacks.

The Valley of Death literally became the graveyard of many people.

At one point, the balance began to collapse. The axis of power shifted from the dominant humans to the Bone Dragon and monsters.

"Oh fuck!"

"It's because of those traitors."

It was already too late to stop fighting each other and concentrate on monsters.

To make matters worse, the situation did not allow them to believe in each other.

It was difficult for the expedition to trust Terose's men that killed the Cold Roses guild. If they once again combined their full strength, they would have had a chance, but they were unable to do so and took increasing cumulative damage.

Finally, the Bone Dragon broke the inhibiting line of defence.

In order to catch the Bone Dragon, its movement must be sealed by constantly attacking; but due to a lack of attacks, it managed to

free itself.

"Keueoeoeo!"

The Bone Dragon flapped its unfolded wings.

As it flew away, the wind pressure knocked down Terose and his men, along with the warriors of the expedition.

"Damn!"

Terose tried to stand up in a hurry.

Gleem!

At that moment, the Bone Dragon's eyes lighted up.

The Bone Dragon took a deep breath, expanding its mouth.

Puwahak!

With a powerful breath, it destroyed Terose and expedition warriors.

"Aaaaah!"

"Please help me!"

"My body ... my body's melting!"

The Bone Dragon's released its most powerful weapon, its breath.

Concentrated in one place, priests, elementalists and wizards with weak stamina literally forced their way through.

"Make it!"

"Come on!"

Frightened, they tried to run away like flies while casting defensive magic. Then, a sweeping breath passed through.

The survivors quickly tried to avoid any incidents by attempting to stop those who suffered significant damage from dying.

As their bodies turned black, their health exponentially declined.

This was the result from being fed poisonous breath.

Initially united, they casted defensive magic on the warriors to slowly weaken the breath, but they could not prevent it from swallowing them up.

"Treatment of the hand!"

"Heal!"

"Recovery!"

The priests' hurriedly casted recovery magic.

Reducing the poison while recovering health!

"Anti-Poison!"

"Poison Cure!"

The priests aggressively cast detoxification magic.

Thanks to their diligent effort, their colleagues hit by the breath survived, but the situation had already turned desperate.

The remains of the expedition numbered in the 400s. The number of survivors was still quite significant; nevertheless, they could no longer fight the Bone Dragon.

They lacked direct combating warriors. The remaining priests, wizards, elementalists, archers, bards and dancers were physically vulnerable jobs.

"Damn! It's happening again."

Volk scored a complaint.

Like the last request he took, he would lose his life again. You would receive a large reward if you died for the promise, but for the Dark Gamers, death itself was a huge loss.

The Dark Gamers including Volk and Lynn Der united in one place.

"What should we do?"

"Contractually we cannot escape."

"So"

"Cool, let's fight!"

Blood started flowing in the Dark Gamers after a long time.

Royal Road was a job for Dark Gamers to make money, but they basically loved the land.

When fighting monsters, they were generally forced to be passive to get home.

However, by the invisible hand of god, they ended up fighting the Bone Dragon and monsters, making their chests burn with spirit.

"Euaaa!"

"Kill him now!"

"Hack them! Hack them!"

In a frenzy, the Dark Gamers ignored the insignificant monsters and charged exclusively towards the Bone Dragon.

"Woo hit hit hit hit!"

"All right! Exciting ain't it?"

When the Bone Dragon knocked them down, they simply laughed. The Dark Gamers stood right back up like zombies and charged again!

In the meantime, the Geomchis' had to deal with the monsters. Wizards and priests fought carefully while observing their surroundings, but they did not take full advantage of the Geomchis.

After fighting dozens of monsters until he was ragged, he could no longer take anymore.

"Keueuk!"

Geomchi emerged injured and collapsed as he died.

Weed decided to intervene in the battle after receiving the report.

"I wish I had not been forced to embark."

Geomchi's death, however, could not be overlooked. Thus, Weed first sent a whisper.

"Brother Geomchi 16."

"Huh? Weed?"

Geomchi 16 said with a very serene tone of voice as opposed to his grim, fighting face.

He was the eldest after Geomchi. Having gone through quite a lot of chaos in reality, he never lost his calm reasoning.

"I heard about the breath attack. Does this mean Ahn Hyundo died?"

"Died. Some circumstances from a while back allowed me to survive. Anyway, let me help you. Please get safely to the back."

"No, there's no need."

Geomchi 16's words were rather unexpected.

"Please wait until I die first."

"Yes?"

"If you are not in front of her, I will have a chance to show her I'm a great man."

Near Geomchi 16 was a beautiful, crying and trembling priest casting treatment magic.

In this cold and dangerous place where hungry and unmatched monsters lurked, she watched a man risk his life!

Geomchi 16 decided to sacrifice his body.

In reality, this situation would never happen. Geomchi 16 typically beat up bullies on sight.

Eventually, Geomchi 16 gloriously collapsed while fighting evil soldiers.

His life had fallen to a dying level, rendering treatment magic

useless.

"I'm sorry, my skills weren't good enough. It would have been better if I died instead..."

"...It's fine, you did everything you could."

Priestess Yevhen's big eyes filled with tears.

She focused her eyes on Geomchi 16.

With a strong presence on the battlefield, he always looked after her.

Now he lost his life.

"Again stay away, one day we will meet again. Even then I would like to protect you, would you do me the honour?"

Geomchi 16 had spent a few days preparing for this moment. He specifically trained under the playboy master, Zephyr.

He said for women, a grieving voice lamenting over not being able to protect them was highly effective in touching their feelings.

"Yes, my name is Libby."

"Geomchi 16."

Register friends!

Having accomplished his goal, Geomchi 16 could finally die.

'I did it.'

Weed arose from his hiding place.

A body made up of only bones!

A figure in the shape of a skeleton advanced on the expedition.

Chapter 3: Rise Of The Undead

Weed in one hand held the Staff of the Fallen Saint and in the other hand, the Magic of Bar-Kahn.

"Wyverns, to the battlefield!"

Wy-1, Wy-2, Wy-3, Wy-5, Wy-6, Wy-7.

The Wyverns pushed their proud wings and flew.

"Ah-choo!"

"Damn I'm getting cold."

"My sin is that I met the wrong owner, now I suffer and suffer!"

In the upper levels of the Valley of Death, cold winds blew ice particles. Weed was afraid of being unable to take the cold just from approaching it!

The Wyverns flew while trembling in the cold. If not for the colorfully dyed wolf leather clothing, they would not have been able to come anywhere near there.

Survivors of the expedition fell into despair as they saw the newly emerging Wyverns.

*

"Oh shit, Wyverns are coming out."

"Now I can't even run away."

However, their complexions quickly brightened up at once.

"What the hell is that, I swear those Wyverns are in clothing. Why are Wyverns wearing clothes?"

"Answer me this, the Wyverns' appearance, doesn't it look a bit weird?"

"That angular face, exceptionally short neck and protruding belly, I've clearly seen it somewhere"

"The Plains of Despair!"

"Wyverns helped the Orcs fight against the undead army.

"So"

"Weed! Weed's here at this place!"

The expedition fell into celebration.

Hero from their dreams!

When asking about the adventurer and champion of the continent, the name Weed would appear.

"Dumb Wyverns, do not miss the food!"

When Weed issued the command to drop him off, the Wyverns vigorously flew to find a place for him observe the battle.

The Wyverns narrowly avoided the gathered expedition to attack monsters. Geumini in the meantime fiercely shot arrows.

The Geomchis, priests and wizards gathered around monsters and started fighting.

Even with the extended help, the situation would still be difficult to reverse.

Weed unfolded the Magic of Bar-Kahn.

In order to deal with the number of monsters, allies were needed. Usable allies were plenty here.

"Rise sleepless spirits living here undetected by eyes. Take

revenge on those that killed you! Dead Rise!”

The land of ice that the expedition stood on darkened in color.

The land produced Zombies, Ghouls and Skeleton Soldiers!

"Kiyahooh!"

"Keuhehel."

As the undead army moved over a distance, Weed pointed and commanded them.

"Fight. Kill them. All your enemies!"

"Keurererel!"

Under Weed's command, the undead sluggishly walked towards the Embinyu Priests and monsters.

Thudding.

With those unnatural movements, they slipped on the ice.

Nevertheless, in the fingernails brandished by the rising zombies contained tremendous strength.

They were strong monsters slow on speed.

"Weed produced those undead!"

"The undead are fighting the monsters."

Said the expedition that had fallen into chaos.

Undead are enemies of the living, yet they only destroyed monsters!

The Necromancer job had long been open to the public, but people had yet to finish changing jobs, so seeing the undead summoning skills with your own eyes was simply amazing.

"Call Death Knight Van Hawk! Call Vampire Tori!"

The summoning of a Death Knight and Vampire Lord!

A stacking Death Knight and pale faced Vampire appeared.

"Today must be very lucky for me to meet my favorite master."

The Death Knight began flattering as soon as he was summoned. Now that Weed had become an Origin of the Skeleton, there was a sense of intimacy.

Weed acknowledged that it had been a long time.

"Death Knight!"

"Master, give your orders. Which one do I fight? Just demand it and I will bring them in front of you as an offering."

The victory loving Death Knight replied confidently, but Weed shook his head.

"It's not that. Take off your helmet and give it to me."

"....."

"Did you not hear me? Take off your helmet and give it to me. I'm going to wear it."

In the world for only five seconds and already facing perfectly cruel behavior!

Returned only to be snatched again.

It was originally owned by the Death Knight, Weed was just going to steal it.

"This is my stuff."

The Death Knight stood upright and tried to protect his magic helmet.

Weed made a fist.

"Would you rather I beat you?"

Choose between a mix of coercion and violence!

Weed did not exercise patience.

"Don't make me tell you twice."

"... I'll give it to you."

The Death Knight was forced to gently take off his magic helm.

For others, this fearful atmosphere would simply be considered as intimidation, but Weed had reached a stage of mastery in physical beatings. With his skill proficiency, a few days was all it took for him to knock someone into submission!

It would be nice to see people like that without free will.

"Don't worry. I'll return it later for you to use again. Go fight."

"Understood master."

The Death Knight rushed towards the Embinyu Priests.

Weed then looked back at Tori.

"You take the Bone Dragon."

"Understood."

"Focus on defense rather than attack it. You don't need to defeat it."

Tori was given orders to challenge the Bone Dragon and fight to the end.

"Vampire Queen and Vampire children, don't stick together. We are the nobility of the night."

"Yes my lord!"

Tori also turned into a bat with them.

Sharp vampire teeth!

Flapping their black wings, they clung on to the giant Bone Dragon and incited an attack.

You cannot defeat the opponent, but you can at least earn some time.

Weed in the meantime wore the magic helm.

"As long as it is written, let it be seen."

The magic helm made of cursed iron.

In the area drilled between the eyes, a brilliant yet insidious light burst out.

Glowing eyes like the flames of hell!

The Magic Helm of Van Hawk was among the items obtained from the Death Knight in Lavias.

At one time, he always wore the item, but not long ago, he created the Mithril Helmet of Noble Grace. Although he returned it to the Death Knight, he found himself in need of it once again.

- Resistance to Dark Magic is increased.
- Affinity with undead is increased by 10.

The magic helm granted options.

Weed once again used magic to summon the undead.

'Quite a lot of mana left.'

Step 1 of basic undead summoning magic.

Creating hundreds of dead bodies consumed about 4,000 mana only.

Staff of the Fallen Saint!

Thanks to the immense effect of the weapon and his remaining mana, Weed decided to equip it.

'The physical force of the Origin of the Skeleton tends to be on the stronger side.'

Even without mana, you can engage in hand to hand combat.

Weed opened the Magic of Bar-Kahn and used step 2 of undead summoning magic.

"Ye who have returned to the land of living. This black and corrupt land is a dark place. The eternal dark law will never disappear, engrave this upon yourself. Undead Rise!"

Bureureu.

Vibrations arose from the Staff of the Fallen Saint.

Weed saw numerous bodies being produced.

They did not have any necks, Dulahans!

Combat loving warriors.

In addition, a number of Skeleton Mages rose.

There were hundreds of undead. The large scale made it hard for them to be controlled.

Thanks to the Staff and Magic Helm, Weed had command of the forces, but he could not afford to create more undead as most of his mana had been used.

Only about 200 mana remaining!

A flash of light came from the Magic Helm Weed was wearing.

"Fight! War! Unfurl your hatred towards the enemy!"

Weed's yell intensely radiated. His advanced Lion's Roar skill exhausted his remaining mana.

The undead jumped towards the Bone Dragon and monsters

under Weed's command to fight.

The zombies fought with broken bones and even resorted to using flying limbs.

The Dulahans embraced their ghoulish heads next to their torsos and in the other arm, they brandished swords.

"Fight!"

"Enemies everywhere!"

Weed also created several boss class monsters!

Boss class Dulahans and Skeleton Mages gave rise to a dazzling performance.

For the first time in the battle, the expedition stood frozen, transfixed on the true power that was Necromancer magic.

"Unbelievable!"

"So many undead."

Usually in the game you avoid hunting undead!

During the expedition, most people saw undead for the first time.

A few people, however, could not believe that their eyes could shine like that.

"Don't you think that undead looks somewhat familiar?"

"Hmm? I guess so."

"Maybe it's Oberon?"

It was an unusually short Dulahan. Rather than avoiding the enemies, the Dulahan with a small body fought fiercely.

Necromancer magic used bodies in the place of elements. In other words, if there were no bodies, the power of the Necromancer spells was bound to decline.

The bodies of the expedition that died during the fight against monsters resurrected as the undead.

Tons of zombies and their exposed defects ran towards the enemy, stumbling on their dead limbs.

Their skills were nonexistent, but they had an appearance very similar to those killed in the past.

"But what are they?"

Rusty soldier armor. Dulahans also consisted of soldiers wearing old patterned armor.

These were Soldiers and Knights of the Nifleheim Empire.

All those that had fallen in the Valley of Death thus far were awakened by the call of Weed.

"Kyaohoh!"

The scary undead cornered the monsters.

Weed saw information silently emerge on the message pane.

- You have acquired experience.
- Dulahan has killed an Embinyu Priest with amazing power. Due to the unbelievable victory, fame rises by 1.
- Ghoul has been killed.
- Concerning the Skeleton Soldiers destroyed in the attack, if you use the Dead Rise Again magic, the mana cost will be halved.
- Skeleton Mage's remaining mana is 35%.

Undead were differed from sculptures.

Unlike sculptures, they consume mana, but as soon as they are created, they can fight. In addition, they were typically stronger compared to the general levels.

The undead did not get that much stronger so instead, you produced a significant number of undead whenever possible.

From the undead came a certain percentage of their fame and experience gain.

Necromancers have to assess the situation faster than other jobs to know what to do with their monster army. In other words, it was a job that required considerable leadership.

Weed summoned amazing boss class undead!

"Kiwowol!"

"Corpse explosion!"

"Bone shield!"

Some of the Skeleton Mages used corpse explosion. Bodies were scattered in front of a bunch of enemies without mercy.

The ghoulishly strengthened Dulahans went wild, too wild.

They differed from humans. Nothing good ever happened with those from beyond the grave. After collapsing onto the ground, they crawled on their bellies and chomped on your ankles, trying everything to accomplish their goal!

The horror of the ruthless undead army.

They attacked with unexpected methods. Fighting style based on crumbling bodies.

Royal Road Hall of Fame!

Hundreds of thousands of viewers were already looking at the rumors spread through the internet. Every room in society received a broadcast report. Considering the millions of people following them, the number might even have exceeded twenty million.

- Bone Dragon hunt.

- The heat and drought will be removed from the continent quite soon.

Joy and pleasure!

People enjoyed watching the exhilarating moment of victory.

Then Terose's betrayal of the expedition was shown.

If it was just a simple betrayal, it would not have been that important, however, because of the betrayal, the battle became extremely disadvantageous. Oberon also lost his life.

- That's what those guys are like.

- Cowardly bums, why go that far?
- What jerks.
- Worthless scum!

The expedition crew was filled with anger over the death of their leader.

However, they lacked the power to rule the world. Morally, they deserved to be blamed for the betrayal.

Besides, if they failed, the heat would have to be endured for a longer period of time!

Reckless insults fired off.

Hundreds of thousands of insults fully enveloped bulletin boards. Quite a few videos had to be shut down because so many people watching complained.

Then he appeared.

Weed!

- Dude, dude, it's Weed from Continent of Magick!
- Weed is leading the undead.
- No, he produced the undead!

People were excited.

A name heard everywhere. Weed!

Many people wore the famous name Weed, but there was only one true Weed.

The top ace in the Continent of Magic that defeated both the blood sucking vampire family and the undead army.

Weed was already a celebrity.

Thanks to the fuss from made from various media, when he sold his account at a high price, he was all the hype.

The appearance of Weed alone was sufficient to thrill the people.

Weeds commanded his created undead soldiers to claw and bite the Embinyu Priests and the evil soldiers that followed them.

"Attack! Fight! Devour away!"

Weed thoroughly ordered his undead army to target only those monsters.

- You have acquired experience.
- Ghoul followers have picked up 3 gold and 15 silver.
- Dulahan has obtained loose cloth.
- Skeleton Mage has picked up a red herb package.

Every time they killed a monster, you received income. Experience tended to climb up pretty quickly as well. Whenever the undead fought, you received a certain percentage of experience, so engaging in direct combat would be fine without the situation turning into a mess.

'It's a combat series job too!'

As Weed's hunt progressed smoothly, tears of sadness seemed to flow.

True combat series job.

Necromancer job boasts of the highest known growth rate and a taste in the dead.

Necromancers accumulated experience four times faster than other professions.

Of course, the hunt was limited to the moment. Necromancers usually roam around solo as most parties are never comfortable around them.

Necromancer is a job making undead bodies. Therefore, in order to utilize their skills, they need bodies.

The first undead!

To make it, you had to first catch and kill a monster with poor magic attacks. As the number of undead increased, earlier problems became much easier to deal with, but there were still some complaints. They had a vulnerable weakness to priests and paladins. Besides that, after a fixed amount of time, you could no longer maintain the undead and they turned back into corpses. To restore the bodies required an enormous amount of mana.

Commanding groups of slow undead into battle was tricky as it burned mana that required spending tedious hours to refill.

In addition to the magical skills of the undead, the quality of the material was important as well. Depending on the body used, the power of individuals varied with worlds of difference.

If the level of the body was over 300, even with low magic skill, you could still create a strong undead.

"Death Knight, Liche, Wight, Banshee or Specter. I wish I could call those monsters, but"

The Origin of the Skeleton had the tendency of a wizard, making the primary and secondary steps of the Necromancer's undead summoning magic spells simple to use! Only step 3 of the Necromancer's undead summoning magic spells had a limit.

Nevertheless, excellent ingredients showed outstanding plays.

Corpses from the expedition, bodies of the dead soldiers of the

Nifleheim Empire, and even the bodies of enemy monsters arose as undead. The opponents outnumbered them 1-4, but this much was sufficient enough.

"Chances are you'll die."

As the battle continued, the undead were unconditionally bound to increase. The Necromancer job had a tremendous advantage.

"Awesome!"

"That guy's the master, Weed-nim."

The expedition looked on with eyes full of envy.

A true adventurer of the Versailles Continent.

An absolute existence that showed no quest was impossible.

The people in the expedition crew were bound to revere such a figure.

"Hmm."

Weed also felt the attention as he stood cross-armed while watching the battle. In order to not expose his body of bones, he stood in a dignified manner as he watched the battle.

"Hu hu, my undead army's fighting well."

Weed stood moderately above the 50,000 minions.

Of course, the expedition concentrated all their attention on the situation at that place. They were extremely curious as to how others besides themselves came to this place.

Weed heard the babble from the expedition crew through his ears. (no ears tho, skull joke)

"Why a skeleton though?"

"I don't know, maybe he offended someone somewhere and got cursed for it?"

"I don't think so. The curse is still fully intact."

"Anyway, is he going to show us an authentic black magic show?"

"If that's true, we should wait for him to demonstrate the power of Necromancers."

"Weed the master will definitely show an amazing scene."

Weed's ears tingled. It was not embarrassment, but rather he

could not disclose the fact that he ran out of mana!

'Can't use Necromancer skills anymore.'

Blood flowing.

The staff held in his hand added strength.

As always, bodies will suffer from an evil mind.

Weed aimed his staff towards the body of monsters.

Pabababak!

The motion of the staff was smooth. It moved freely under the palm of his hand and lodged itself into moving monsters.

His fantastic swordsmanship debuted in front of people with a staff.

There is a big difference between swords and canes.

The sword was a sharp weapon that slashed opponents, while the staff was simply something that smashed your opponents.

The attack of the Staff of Saint Taranhan was much better than that of his sword!

Weed indiscriminately smashed the monsters in front of him.

'Experience! Experience is calling me.'

Items and money picked up by the undead all returned back to Weed. More than half of the experience, however, would be lost to the governed undead.

Therefore, Weed thoroughly picked out monsters with their lives at risk.

With his supreme broad field of vision, he noticed everything!

Although Weed could not afford to die, he attacked multiple monsters at once.

Wherever he passed through, monsters turned into carcasses.

Weed swept through the camp like a storm.

'Anyway, once the Bone Dragon dies, I'll have to diligently fight to make up for the lost experience.'

In addition, the mastery of many valuable skills needless to say was a big loss.

To make up for his low damage, Weed picked only the monsters with little remaining life left.

"It's really Weed-nim!"

"Even without magic he can fight."

"Damn! I want to hunt monsters by moving my body like that."

"With that degree of skill as a wizard, what kind of damage is that"

"What level is he?"

Admiration deepened in the eyes of the expedition.

This view was unavoidable as there were significantly less monsters everywhere he passed through.

Like the wind, he swept away the monsters, the stem of the problematic situation.

Weed did not leave their eyes.

The undead fought in place of the inactive people as Weed ran straight into a crowd and instantly destroyed a number of enemies.

Mysterious movements of the staff.

Remarkable moves and smoothly connecting actions.

It seemed the continuous melee until now was simply fiction, for the battle had now become clean and organized.

In fact, Weed planned to release the near death undead for the people to finish up, but their views were completely opposite.

"You're so strong!"

"Battling like that, so cool!"

The expedition continuously spat out praise.

Weed's artistic movements were sufficient enough to garner admiration.

Origin of the Skeleton was a thorough job, fairly strong in battles.

In the finest combination with the weapon, the Staff of the Fallen Saint, Weed's damaged shined even more.

For ordinary people, it was difficult to imagine the violence and intense skills Weed demonstrated.

30 meters away, an Embinyu Priest was dying away.

About to collapse!

However, the sword above the Dulahan was ready to descend.

At this, Weed snapped one of his ribs and angrily shouted.

"Bone-throw!"

He threw his broken rib toward the target.

The sharpened bone went flying! Only the Origin of the Skeleton had such a unique skill.

The bone flew with strong momentum and claimed the life of the target before it died. (KS FTW)

- You have used part of the body.

Until the bone is recovered, damage is reduced by 1.3% and defense decreases by 2%.

Weed very busily moved to fight, acquire items, threw bones and often direct the undead army. He moved at all times without ceasing, striking all the monsters like an endless gale.

In a sense, the spirit of Geomchi also fought with the expedition.

As a result, the Embinyu Priests and Evil Soldiers could not withstand the onslaught.

"Kuaaa!"

The roar of the Bone Dragon!

All that remained was to deal with the boss-class monster, the Bone Dragon.

Vampire Tori was also fighting, but he took devastating damage. Of the Vampires serving under him, only half remained!

Countless of undead roared on the ground, but they would not help much in the battle with the Bone Dragon and the expedition was now exhausted without strength to fight anymore.

Weed was in conflict.

'Should I retreat to the side now?'

He had already secured an escape route. If he sacrificed Tori's life, he could escape.

'But I won't know the truth of the history of the Nifleheim Empire that took place in the Valley of Death.'

The quest took precedence.

Seeing as the quest was one of a kind, he had to somehow clean up the situation on the ground!

The Bone Dragon had emerged from a big cave. Perhaps in there contained a true secret of the Nifleheim Empire, but going into the cave while avoiding the Bone Dragon's sight would be a formidable task. In addition, while it fought, the larger surroundings of the cave might collapse, trapping him inside. When it is time to come out, there might even be a bigger problem.

'To step back here would lead to a more difficult opportunity. Kill the Bone Dragon now!'

Weed made a decision.

As far as fighting monsters goes, he never stood in the back. Sometimes working meticulously for long hours may not be rewarded, but challenges have never been successful without putting in effort.

Weed revived the spirit of the tireless fighter from the Continent of Magick.

'Looks like it will need a sharp blow.'

Weed confirmed the mana gathered during the fight. By fighting only with his body, he conserved mana and recovered 43%.

"Gloomy darkness falls upon the spear. Spear born from the darkness, penetrate the enemy's heart. Appear, Dark Spear!"
(Frankenstein anybody)

Weed opened his side arm and caught the spear of black life in his hand.

Insidious fog streamed from the spear.

The spear was created through Black Magic.

Among the most powerful magic attacks usable, it was a skill that consumed lots of mana.

More than half of his remaining mana was consumed.

"Go!"

Weed through the power of his soul directed the Dark Spear towards the Bone Dragon.

Tori helped Seoyoon toward the few surviving Dark Gamers fighting the Bone Dragon.

Declaration of war.

Regarding the Bone Dragon as game, he faced it with a determined expression of wanting to inflict pain upon it.

Chapter 4: Single Point Attack Arts

Sswaeaeaeak!

The Dark Spear tore sharply through the air and rushed in a straight line, piercing the Bone Dragon's wing.

"Kkeueoeoeo!"

Howled the Bone Dragon greatly. It screamed painful groans.

"Only just the beginning."

Weed on the other hand just smiled. Before killing the Bone Dragon, he enjoyed watching it writhe in pain.

His happiness is relative to its suffering!

Normally, he would have undoubtedly given away a rotten smile, but now that he was a skeleton, he was free to cruelly laugh. Thus, he laughed, significantly spreading his temporomandibular apart. (jaw joint)

More bastardly than anyone else.

"Keuheuheuheuheu!"

Weed suddenly burst into laughter.

He took out a large number of red potions from his backpack.

Rapid recovery potions.

They were refreshments that rapidly healed injuries. Indispensable as one could not buy them.

“Elder brothers, try to gather over here!”

55 Geomchis were still alive. With life surpassing that of cockroaches, they survived the battle with the monsters.

“What’s the matter?”

“What’s going on?”

The Geomchis hanged around at the gathering place.

“If you’re in danger, drink it.”

Weed gave each of them 9 red potions, not forgetting to add a few words.

“What a lovely aroma.”

“Oooooo.”

The Geomchis cheered.

To them, such things were considered the same as tasty delicacies!

Geomchi 39 opened the cap of a potion.

“Oh, this soft scent.”

The potion of life was refreshing and simple.

Made out of troll’s blood, the potion was undeniably a great drink.

The Geomchis viewed this as eating a delicacy.

“Yummy.”

Geomchi 39 had no immediate need for it, so when he was about to drink the potion, Weed said something insinuating.

“But....”

“Hmm?”

“Geomchi 16 was such a glorious warrior elder brother.”

“Uh, what do you mean?”

Geomchi 39 was quite surprised, his eyes narrowing. The dead man was intolerable due to deliberately escaping danger.

“What the hell happened?”

“Well... the fact is, it worked out with a woman he liked in the expedition, elder brother.”

“What went through the woman’s mind that made her like dead senior?”

“He fought to keep the monsters away from her and died bravely, so the woman registered him as a friend.”

Register friends!

Geomchi 39's eyes sparkled and thousands of photos came into view. The Geomchis that had gathered around to get potions also stumbled.

“Disgrace to register friends.....”

“You fucking with me?”

“Until now, I thought us men only had the ability to register friends with each other.”

Geomchi 39 dubiously asked.

“Are you saying he really registered a woman as a friend using that method?”

“Yeah, definitely.”

“You saw it with your own eyes, not in a dream, right? It’s not some story based on ridiculous rumors you heard?”

“I heard the report directly from him. Women like strong men. Fight the Bone Dragon while looking awesome, even if you fail, you demonstrate your courage so their minds will certainly have positive thoughts.”

Geomchi 39 grabbed his weapon.

“Weed.”

“Yes, elder brother?”

“Good information, thanks for the heads up. Euaaa! This old bachelor owes you his honor.”

Geomchi 39 ran toward the Bone Dragon with all his power. No matter how strong the Bone Dragon was, it was not as frightening as washing dishes all alone!

Lonely Geomchi 39 howled. The other Geomchis that subsequently followed rushed fiercely as well.

“Kill that thing!”

“Must die as beautifully and elegantly as possible!”

‘They did not have the mind to back off anyway.’

More than anyone, the Geomchis enjoyed combat, there’s no way they would ever perceive the opponent as a burden.

So far, the expedition was quietly taking a rest when a change occurred in the army of wizards and priests.

“All the mana I collect here ... let this bright light burn straight towards the enemy and be a strike of fury. Mana Burn!”

Wizard’s Mana Burn attack!

The Bone Dragon flying low in the sky crashed to the ground once again by the Mana Burn attack.

Priests also joined forces.

“Ionizing powers. Please grant me the power to make things right and defeat the monster. Grant thy servant the strength to reclaim the luminosity. I fear neither the sacrifice nor the counsel against me.”

The ultimate divine magic was available only to priests that had completed their second advancement.

Noble Sacrifice!

It was a technique that sacrificed all health and mana in order to attack the enemy.

The damage was more than wizard's Mana Burn, but priests could not endure casting it.

They lost their lives after a single use.

Even after the death of the priests, parties of the expedition still continued to fight hard.

Truly a last resort!

“Kyao! Cowardly humans! Stake your pride in this battle and fight honorably!”

The Bone Dragon’s body blazed. From the inside of its body, hot flames rose and bloomed thanks to the priests’ Noble Sacrifice.

The Bone Dragon on the ground struggled with the pain from the strike.

Unfortunately, the sacrifice of the priests exerted deadly havoc upon undead and vampires.

“Disgusting hot lights shining. They have robbed the power of us nobility of the night.”

Noble Sacrifice also adversely affected Tori.

Tori and the Vampires that fought by turning into bats until now were turned to ashes by the priests’ Noble Sacrifice.

The death was not complete, but they received a strong blow and were reverse summoned!

However, there was now an opportunity.

The Geomchis and Dark Gamers caused a rampage with the Bone Dragon by brandishing their swords and weapons at it.

Kill the Bone Dragon!

But the Bone Dragon did not succumb.

"Stupid humans! Learn what it means to anger me!"

It brandished its whip like tail meters in length to attack the humans.

“Icebolt!”

Icebolts fell like rain from the sky. The Geomchis, Dark Gamers and Seoyoon also met with the Icebolts.

The Bone Dragon sustained damage from the magic at the expense of the whole region.

Narrow Icebolts went beautifully down at random.

"Kkyaahak!"

"Help me!"

The Wizards, Elementalists and priests that lost their powers were the first to die.

Across the Valley of Death, there was no place to avoid the falling Icebolts.

You could only absorb it with your body!

"Sacred doom spear descend. Spear born from the darkness, penetrate the enemy's heart. Appear, Dark Spear!"

As soon as Weed recovered his mana, he summoned the Dark Spear again and then silently approached the Bone Dragon.

‘It’s better to be up close to that enormous body.’

Weed violently pierced the Bone Dragon with the spear.

No need for special attacks.

Hack!

The gigantic figure lying on the ground was assaulted by many attacks.

Moving at spectacular speeds, the Geomchis arrived, but were met with resistance magic at that moment, rendering them unable to slash the Bone Dragon.

Rather than level or skill, it was instinctive behavior.

They combined their movements and slashed the Bone Dragon.

“Kill it!”

“We can win this way.”

Thanks to the sacrifice of the wizards and priests, the Bone Dragon’s huge body was trapped on the ground, allowing it to be attacked.

Nevertheless, the enormous Bone Dragon still had over 20% health remaining.

Suddenly, the Bone Dragon’s eyes shone with brilliance. It opened its mouth and took a deep breath.

“Damn!”

“Everybody out of here!”

Weed, the Geomchis and Dark Gamers wielded their weapons and stood back as everything burned.

Breath!

The Bone Dragon’s strongest attack skill, the breath bursting

from its mouth was a sign to escape.

“How many times can it use its breath?”

Deep down in his core, Weed’s first priority was avoiding.

The Bone Dragon got its head off the ground, readied its incomplete breath and fired.

Puhwahwahwawak!

Breath was fired toward the ground!

The land of ice below melted.

Using the recoil from its breath, it rose into the air and soared. Once in the air, breath began flooding everywhere. It was extremely weaker than the first breath. Nevertheless, there was more than enough power left.

Up until now, the Geomchis and Dark Gamers had just barely dodged, now they were melting away.

The Geomchis as a last resort invigorated their energy by drinking the potions, but the potion essentially just granted a brief moment of stimulated health recovery rate.

The amount recovered by the potion could not compare to the health lost by the attack.

After the strong attack, the Geomchis were bound to weakened and could not cope with the life lost to the breath.

The Dark Gamers and Geomchis were the last remaining warriors responsible for direct combat.

First and foremost, Weed and Seoyoon noticed that there were only a few surviving Paladins that could heal themselves, so they quickly fled.

However, suspended in the air, the floating Bone Dragon appeared to have remaining reserve power.

"I will destroy everything! Demon Spear!"

A huge spear appeared in front of the Bone Dragon. (oh the irony)

However, compared to the Dark Spear Weed created, it was a higher level Black Magic!

The high ranked magic attack required at least the 3rd advancement in a Black Magic job.

It was very likely that due to the Bone Dragon using its breath up till now and virtually depleting its mana, it was now forced to use

its best skill.

Weed did not forget to aim at the gap between the Bone Dragon's wings and ribs.

The distance was enough to strike the idle monster.

Sswaeaeaeak!

The Demon Spear released a ferocious sound as it flew toward Weed.

A storm was left in the wake of the massive black spear.

Using its power of control, the Bone Dragon did not miss its target.

“Damn!”

Weed stepped back and ran.

“Death Knight! Undead in front, block it!”

With few undead remaining, the crowd was useless.

They somehow managed to offset the power of the Demon Spear in an effort to survive, but the Demon Spear still pierced right

through the bodies of the undead!

It appeared highly unlikely that the Death Knight and undead had enough defense to withstand the attack.

The perforated bodies of the undead vanished like dust.

“Sorry master!”

Even the Death Knight Van Hawk was reverse summoned.

The Demon Spear now approached virtually right in front of Weed.

‘Never thought I’d die twice in one day. Today’s really the worst day ever.’

Power from the Blood Necromancer, the power to reject death!

Its biggest weakness was emerging.

“Cold Sealed Eyes!”

Weed closed his eyes.

Finally, everything would end.

‘If I’m lucky maybe I’ll survive.’

But even after a few seconds, no pain was felt.

“Did it miss? Impossible.”

Weed opened his eyes. Then he saw the woman in front of him blocking.

Seoyoon!

She sacrificed her body to block the Demon Spear, but in exchange for that, Seoyoon was dying.

Weed took out his bandages in a hurry, but her life was already nearly exhausted.

No matter what the Bone Dragon used thus far, Seoyoon was able to withstand it.

However, with an anxious and impatient face, Seoyoon opened her mouth.

“Friend

Doing something unimaginable!

Never in his dreams did Weed did think she would say that line.

‘Wasn’t she mute?’

Even Seoyoon herself gave a startled expression at the word.

As if coming from heaven itself, a clear and brilliant voice.

Weed then heard the voice of a stiff person.

- Seoyoon has requested to register you as a friend. Will you accept?

Weed quickly nodded.

“Yes.”

-Seoyoon-nim has been registered as a friend.

It was only for a brief moment, but Seoyoon died with a rather relieved face.

When Seoyoon found out about the first breath the Bone Dragon emitted, part of heart seemed to collapse.

‘Weed. He’s dead.’

Actually, the time they spent together was not long, but her feelings quietly grew.

Looking at the sculptures he created, she discovered warmth.

Eating the food he created, she learned of a simple happiness.

Anywhere they stayed together, she was able to feel comfortable.

That was a friend.

Seoyoon knew Weed was dead because of the Bone Dragon, she did not know why she felt such a dense anger.

As expected of a Berserker, for the first time she surrendered her body to rage.

Without caring for her life, she attacked the Bone Dragon!

But somehow, Weed survived.

His shape changed a lot, but Geumini and the Wyverns that appeared alongside Weed were unmistakable.

From the sounds of the expedition crew, she heard the story as well.

‘You’re alive.’

Seoyoon herself felt a little joy. In a warm corner of her heart, she felt relived.

‘You needlessly worried.’

Blushing alone in vain, she silently devoted herself to the battle.

‘Anyway, I am not someone who can receive love. Again I’m not questing with others.’

In a corner of her mind and heart, she planned only to remain with Weed until the end of his quest where they would separate from each another.

From the start, it was the natural choice for someone like her unaccustomed to hanging out with others.

Such a conclusion had already been made.

But when the Demon Spear flew toward Weed, contrary to her thoughts, her body moved first.

‘No!’

Seoyoon blocked in front of Weed.

It was normal for her not to continue to fight after the critical hit from the Demon Spear.

‘Dying.’

Seoyoon had a premonition of death.

There was no regret about level or skill.

In any case, the gaining of such things was not even for hunting.

While hunting alone, she suffered countless deaths.

Access restricted for the day, because of the time, she changed and tried not to die if possible, eventually the fear of death itself disappeared.

If you died near villages or in caves, you would be conjured up in a safe zone. However, the problem was where that place is and where to go in order to find Weed.

‘To meet this person now and again is very unlikely. If by chance we don’t overlap in this vast land, I’ll be unable to see him. Eternal separation...’

Seoyoon was puzzled by her heart’s sudden disturbance.

Separation with someone.

Having believed she had not received love, she did not know eternally separating with someone would break her fragile heart.

She faced him. Then, unknowingly she said.

“Friend...”

-Weed-nim has been registered as a friend.

Seoyoon came and took Weed by surprise, making him tremble in fear.

“What in the world was that evil woman doing there! She’s definitely up to something vile.”

It’s said that beautiful roses originally have thorns.

Seoyoon's level of beauty was comparable to the art of the century. The skin, body and face. A place where a flaw could be found did not exist.

Even her loosely flowing ebony hair exquisitely matched her fantastic figure.

No matter who, be it a painter or a poet could not skilfully express her charm. To properly depict the beauty and atmosphere she radiated was truly difficult.

Lightly loose hair down to her shoulders and clear skin, eyes, etc. it was impossible for anyone to keep their eyes off her face.

Weed on the other hand was concerned about the poison that matched her beauty.

“Until now she was able to speak but didn’t!”

There were numerous opportunities to speak, even when cooking or hunting, but so far, she had never so much as spoken a word, making the other party mistake her for a mute person.

“This must be a cruel trap. She will accuse me of ignoring her when she spoke and not doing something that I knew nothing about. Bad taste, such bad taste. How could there be a woman with such bad taste like this.”

Weed further raised his vigilance of Seoyoon.

“But why did she suddenly ask me to register her as a friend, why? So far, no deal had been made yet.”

Weed grew rapidly suspicious of her pure intentions.

Darkness, backstabbing, conspiracy, plotting or fraud, Weed thought of everything possible.

Suddenly, a sinister tactic passed through his mind.

“No way... that’s right! I knew it.”

Weed hit the palm of his hand after coming up with a solid reason.

“She said register friends right before she died! Female, you’ll have to find me first.”

Everyone drops items when they die. Weed believed that when Seoyoon died, she worried about her dropped items and assumed that by adding him as a friend, she could leave her things with him who would never lose or sell her stuff!

“That must be it. You’re a wicked woman.”

Weed once again trembled after suggesting how human beings employed such calculations in order to thrive. Perhaps it was merely coincidence that the Demon Spear struck her. This place is the land of ice. It might have been bad luck and by chance she slipped on the earth, who knows! Weed closed his eyes at the end, making what he knew even more unknown.

“Deliberately sparing me on purpose because you believed you could afford to die and take advantage of me later. That’s right. No

way was it a slip.”

To protect Weed was mostly Seoyoon's impulsive decision.

Weed did not see it that way and thought about why as he examined the place where Seoyoon died. He then observed the promised items that dropped!

“What the hell.”

At Seoyoon's gravesite was thick leather created from pork leather. It was Weed who made these clothes for the winter. Only this dropped.

“Unique items of high caliber didn't even drop. So pitiful, when I try, I just don't have any luck.”

Weed picked up the leather clothes while complaining. Then the Bone Dragon arrived to deliver mockery.

"O foolish and presumptuous man! This is your limit."

The Bone Dragon's immense wings flapped as it floated in the sky! Heavy wind pressure struck the surrounding snow and cracked the ice into regions.

Weed, as well as the few remaining survivors of the expedition saw the power charge up within its stomach. The expedition crew

was frustrated.

“Now we’re finished.”

“It’s nearly dead thanks to the priests and wizards, but we have no method of fighting the Bone Dragon while it’s flying in the sky.”

They felt thoroughly helpless.

“If not for the betrayal...”

Even when it was too late to regret, one could not help it!

Up till now, Weed created many undead from the ground.

Dulahan, Death Knight, Zombie, Ghoul, etc.

However, typical monsters are known to be of little help when fighting a Bone Dragon flying in the sky.

It was possible for Skeleton Mages to use magic, but they would not inflict any significant damage to the Bone Dragon.

The expedition felt desperate as they watched Weed. There was no one else that could fight.

“Go back to your origins. Return undead!”

Weed memorized the spell. All the undead struggled with the force of the earth as they lost their power and collapsed. The reason was to recover a source of mana.

The expedition believed Weed abandoned them, increasing their responsibility.

“Ah. Finally!”

“Unless you die, you’re not leaving.”

The Bone Dragon laughed at the ludicrous humans.

"Foolish human race! Feel the transgression of time!"

But it was then.

“Bone Dragon, has your mind still not noticed? Can you not see what is happening?”

Weed did not back down in the slightest as he taunted the Bone Dragon.

"It is ludicrous that I will meet my end here, who do you think you're talking to?"

“You, you idiot!”

Weed aimed to intimidate the Bone Dragon with this.

To the Bone Dragon, terrified food was unnecessary.

Of course, it was recognized as a difficult to capture monster. Normally, it would be like hitting a rock with an egg. The fight itself would never have been started!

But now the situation had changed a lot.

‘Due to the battle, its health has fallen below 20%. And with that multitude of spells, there should not be any mana remaining.’

There was no reason to panic.

Due to excessive loss of life, a significant amount of physical strength and power shall be reduced.

Apparently, it boasted of outrageous grandeur, when in fact, it had weakened significantly.

The fight felt worthwhile.

Weed cried out.

“Battle, Bingryong!”

Using Lion's Roar, Weed's cry shook the Valley of Death.

Wareureureu!

Once again, the ice above the valley shattered and snow poured down.

"Keurwarwarwarwarwa!"

And in response, a sky ripping scream was heard from far away.

Something was coming.

At first, it was thought of as a little bird, but it grew larger and larger in shape!

Bingryong!

Enormous at a size of hundreds of meters, Bingryong emerged. It was almost as large as the Bone Dragon.

“Forward! Destroy him!”

On Weed's command, Bingryong flew at a tremendous speed as it rushed the Bone Dragon.

Kwaaaaang!

Bingryong smashed into the Bone Dragon!

The Bone Dragon once hovering in the sky had fallen to the ground.

Bingryong welcomed the great opportunity!

However, Bingryong too wallowed on the ground.

Such a huge impact also weakened his condition.

"I'll kill you."

"The owner has ordered to fight. I'll kill you!"

Bingryong and the Bone Dragon hated each other and fought fiercely.

The Bone Dragon was the first to attack.

As a skeleton with a large head, it took a bite out of Bingryong's side.

Blindly shattering the ice into debris, the axial wings were finally injured.

Attack of the mighty Bone Dragon!

But that did not stop Bingryong. He slammed his hind legs and tail into the Bone Dragon's body and recklessly slashed it with his front foot.

“Keuaag!”

“Ahh! It hurts!”

The Bone Dragon screamed at Bingryong's barrage. While his massive body was still up in the air, he bit and slashed his opponent.

The fighting between the two dragons turned the ground into tornado wreckage. Tremendous winds brought about a flurry of snow and ice as well as an earthquake that made standing up impossible.

Weed calmly watched the battle between the Bone Dragon and Bingryong.

‘The Bone Dragon has weakened.’

Bingryong's power was strong enough to draw. Nevertheless, he was to some extent eager to fight the Bone Dragon simply because he was tired of waiting.

If the Bone Dragon was in perfect condition, it would have overwhelmed Bingryong in an instant by ripping his neck off.

‘The fight’s a simple matter of which side dies first.’

Weed was not the type to just sit back and watch.

“Wy-3! Come forth!”

“At once master!”

The Wyverns were not brave enough to dare stay around the perimeter of the Bone Dragon. They only came and accepted their fates as a ride to avoid dying by the hands of their master.

Weed climbed on top of the Wyvern.

“Fly. We fight.”

“Understood master!”

There was an emergency when they spread their wings. Weed inquired about it.

- Strength is reduced due to the cold.

The chill of the northern sky was too harsh to cope with. In the past, there was a severe cold as they hovered in the skies. But if they waited, it would be uncertain if they would be able to kill the Bone Dragon.

‘Do not expect good luck. Fight yourself!’

Weed aboard the Wyverns recalled the Dark Spear.

To ensure the destruction of the Bone Dragon’s life, he directly involved himself in combat.

“Fly at full speed!”

Upon Weed’s command, the Wyverns flapped their wings even more violently.

Wind maddening!

Weed then viciously launched the Dark Spear towards the Bone Dragon’s ribs.

Piercing through the battlefield, it penetrated the wind barrier surrounding Bingryong and the Bone Dragon.

Pakagak!

Tremendous resilience as sparks sprang up.

‘The source of the Bone Dragon’s life is its defense. Because of its tremendous defense and health, it will not die. If so, how can I kill him?’

Weed recalled from long ago when he learned the sword in the dojo.

“Lee Hyun, can you topple that tree so big that you cannot wrap your arms around it with your sword?”

At Ahn Hyundo’s question, Lee Hyun shook his head.

It was impossible.

No matter how sharp swords are, there is a limit to the thickness of trees before they can no longer be cut down. Especially in the case of living trees, they have withstood dozens of ax methods.

Relatively light and dark weapons are not suitable for cutting wood.

“Slashing with a sword is... unreasonable I think.”

“Really? It is difficult but not impossible. Your elder brothers can do this. With a sword they can cut down huge trees. Among the trainees, it’s possible for about half of them?”

Lee Hyun’s head was puzzled.

“How is such a thing possible? No matter how good they are at wielding a sword, the strength required to accomplish such a task is unreasonable.”

“It’s cutting the grain of the wood.”

“Grain?”

“In both heaven and earth, all things possess grain, so you simply cut along the flow. Without having to expend great strength, you can cut down anything you want. Even if it is rock or metal, as long as you cut along the grain, it is not difficult to cut it down.”

“I can do it too?”

“If you make the effort. A great sword is not born, it is tempered dozens of times. A sword alone is nothing, but a sword inscribed by people through decades of hardship can slash through anything in the world.”

Ahn Hyundo actively spoke of his past where he honed his sword

proficiency directly from the battlefield during his youth.

Then by accident he came about a different story in Royal Road.

Ahn Hyundo burst into laughter.

“Royal Road, in the Versailles Continent, there are many interesting elements. We looked and found a similar result.”

“Are you telling me if you follow the grain, anything can be cut down?”

“It’s significantly different but yeah. After many experiences the best method we discovered was basically concentrating power on one spot.”

“I would like to know what you mean by this.”

Without hesitation Ahn Hyundo turned to tell Lee Hyun about Royal Road. You can wield a sword anywhere in that place. It was a virtual reality game that did not ignore this virtue.

It is written that swords are to protect oneself, discipline oneself and care for one’s family.

He knew why Lee Hyun played Royal Road, so there was no reason to condemn him.

“I’ll tell you. The way we wield the sword is different every time a monster receives damage. I believe you know this?”

“Yes, the power of the sword varies when cutting different areas.”

In Royal Road, you must directly move your body.

Because you have to move your body to wield the sword, damage is dependent on several factors.

Balanced stance and circumstances, power and speed, technique, attack and defense of the monster, are all major elements in determining damage along with numerous minor elements.

“Yes, that is the primary reason. Stats and level are important, but the way to deal maximum damage is through focus.”

“Would that be to attack a vital point?”

“That’s a decent way, but some have no vital point to strike. However, even the mightiest monsters are bound to succumb to cryptanalysis. Be warned, this method is not easily executed.”

Lee Hyun always had questions about the Geomchis’ outrageous attacks. No matter how similar a job was to martial artists, the damage was typically too strong to compare.

When their levels were around 50, they acquired the combat series job and quickly took hold of monsters forcing him to wonder. Lee Hyun asked.

“What is cryptanalysis?”

“Where you strike the same place over and over again.”

“That I know. When you continue to hit one part, you can cause slightly greater damage to some extent.”

He had obtained information on how to hunt before starting Royal Road. In other words, Lee Hyun had been using this method to battle relatively well. This secret could not be called special.

Ahn Hyundo simply laughed and spoke of the underlying story.

“Have you ever seen concentrating hits on a single point?”

“But that does not reap such a large effect. However, I’m sure there is another meaning to those words. Do you mean precisely hitting that one point again?”

“You’re quick to understand. The place once attacked, attack it again and it will severely weaken after. Smaller than a fingernail, smaller than a grain of rice, focus all attacks to that point. Even if you lack strength, you can still destroy the monster.”

Ahn Hyundo knew his teaching wasn't something anybody could use. You must wield a weapon with all your might and attack a point smaller than a grain of rice repeatedly.

Even against nonmoving targets, there are times when you aren't confident of success.

To target vigorously active monsters, you must predict and understand the relative movements in advance and at the decisive moment, you must align every action to explode simultaneously.

An exceptional human being, it is difficult to even dream of such a state.

Ahn Hyundo said this without hesitation.

“Tens of million of milliseconds. To bring the sword into combat, for life to vanish, the time is to be determined. At that one moment, it is not impossible to bring about your will. It is possible because human beings are not machines.”

Chapter 5: Treasures Of Nifleheim

Kaaaang!

Weed slammed the Dark Spear into the Bone Dragon's ribs.

Devastating stab!

The Dark Spear was perfectly wedged into the ribs, but the Bone Dragon's

body remained intact.

It remained strong and its appearance was largely unchanged, but at least its health declined slightly.

Weed thrust the Dark Spear again. Just before the attack, he precisely aimed again!

'I must match my breathing to it. Relax the muscles. Forget everything else. Only one point is shown. Wide. Boundless.'

Kaaaaang!

This time there was an even greater resonance.

- Fatal blow struck. Adds 29% damage

Weed wielded the Dark Spear freely in his hand.

‘Till it is destroyed!’

Swinging, chopping, and stabbing.

All attacks can be concentrated onto one location.

Single focal point.

Peoseoseok!

At the end of five attacks, the Bone Dragon’s rib shattered into pieces.

"Keuaaag!"

Bingryong was fighting the Bone Dragon as it screamed in agony.

“You fucking coward! Die!”

The Bone Dragon swung its tail but it was too late, for Weed had already escaped with Wy-3.

“My attack has only just begun.”

Weed boarded the Wyvern and quickly flew off into the black sky.

Bingryong and the Bone Dragon were intertwined in their aerial battle as they dealt attacks at each other.

Still damaged from the prior attack, the Bone Dragon's shattered rib remained exposed.

Actions already difficult on the ground now required balance in the air, creating a small gap to aim at.

It was time to give the Bone Dragon a nightmare, but it would require amazing control at close range.

But Weed was not confident given the situation.

-Due to the cold Strength will be reduced by 16%.

From the cold winds blowing at the top of Death Valley, the body reached its limitations.

The Undead state allowed him to withstand some cold, but due to the freezing weather, his Strength and Stamina declined rapidly.

The cold also made the Wyverns dizzy, causing them to slip several times already.

If they fell onto the ice ground, their lives could not be guaranteed.

‘Not much remains now though.’

Weed read the movements of the Bone Dragon.

It finally reached its limit after receiving tremendous damage from the expedition and Weed breaking many of the bones in its body. Apparently, the Bone Dragon’s time was coming to an end within moments.

The Wyverns and Geumini chiseled away at the Bone Dragon here and there as well.

“Pesky flies, be gone you bastards!”

The Bone Dragon struggled fiercely from the hits. Nevertheless, the decisive attacks from the Wyverns, Bingryong and Weed did not cease.

Because its body was entangled with Bingryong’s, escape was impossible.

With solemn dignity the Bone Dragon appeared, but the

expedition wizards brutally dragged it to the ground. Nonetheless, it actively demonstrated its greatness on the eve of its death.

“Let’s go!”

Weed controlled the Wyvern and landed upon the head of the Bone Dragon.

“Time to finish this.”

It was a rough struggle hitting the Bone Dragon whilst standing on its head. Simultaneously, Weed aimed the Dark Spear exclusively at a single point and attacked in rapid succession!

Kwak! Kwajik! Kwagwagwak!

- Fatal blow struck. Adds 46% damage

- Fatal blow struck. Adds 95% damage

- Fatal blow struck. Adds 129% damage

- Fatal blow struck. Adds 167% damage

- Fatal blow struck. Adds 215% damage

Hitting the small point successively increased the damage

exponentially!

"Keueoeoeo."

The Bone Dragon's resistance almost disappeared completely. With its health falling below 10%, it became even more difficult to move.

Nevertheless, some time remained until the end of the Bone Dragon.

If it was a normal monster, it would have lost the will to fight immediately, but as one would suspect when dealing with large monsters, particularly named boss monsters of a region, it held on tenaciously.

'You know, all you're doing is making me tired.'

With the cold wind blowing, Weed's stamina rapidly declined as he fought.

Given the variables, if the battle was prolonged, the Bone Dragon might choose self-annihilation.

Weed yelled at the visible body in the air.

"Bingryong, use your breath!"

“Understood master!”

Bingryong took a deep breath and exhaled.

Ice breath that froze everything!

With no place to escape, the Bone Dragon dove towards Bingryong's feet as the breath was released.

Jjeojeojeojeok!

At that moment, the Bone Dragon's body was frozen stiff instantly!

In its usual state, it would have warded off the attack to some extent due to its magic resistance, but with its abnormal status, the ice breath literally froze the Bone Dragon's body.

It was then.

Weed jumped into the air and as he landed, he thrust the spear down with overwhelming force.

- Fatal blow struck. Adds 122% damage.

The target of the past, the point was hit precisely again.

"Keueoeoeo!"

The crack on the Bone Dragon's skull spread over an increasingly broad area, all the way down to its tongue when the whole skull shattered into ice debris.

- You have leveled up.

- You have leveled up.

- You have leveled up.

- You have leveled up.

- You have leveled up.

- You have leveled up.

- You have leveled up.

- The Bone Dragon Kurenbereu which once dominated Death Valley has entered its eternal rest.

- Due to great achievement, fame has risen by 230.

- Charisma has risen by 3.

- Fighting spirit has risen by 2.

Many message windows flashed through Weed's head. Some indicated his level had risen. With the Bone Dragon hunt successful, tremendous experience would be acquired. Even with Weed's current level of over 300, his level should have risen by at least 10, but since he hunted it along with the expedition, the experience was divided and he received a total of 7 levels.

However, there was something even more urgent.

Acquire items!

Weed descended to the ground and ran to the spot where the Bone Dragon crashed.

On top of a hill in Death Valley, items were all over the place.

Some ancient books, a bunch of bones and a shield!

Syasyasyak!

His hands moved rapidly towards the items with battle mentality.

- Current weight has exceeded strength capacity.

Penalty: 35% increase in stamina consumption rate.

Despite transforming into Origin of the Skeleton, he lacked the strength to acquire items.

“Now, time to find the truth about the Nifleheim Empire.”

Weed finally came down the hill to finish his work.

Slowly.

Crawling like a turtle.

Due to the heavy weight, each step was done with the utmost caution. His legs had to be perfect to compensate for his insufficient strength.

‘With all that suffering, I better get something good.’

Earned income was a case of big business!

When weed arrived at the bottom of the hill, he determined his reward.

“Identification!”

Emblem of the Nifleheim Empire:

Durability: 5

Meaning of the emblem is based on the imperial family.

The loyal royal knights of the once noble Nifleheim Empire garnered respect from everybody.

Can be attached to weapons and armors.

Options:

+100 Dignity

+50 Charm

+200 Fame

Nobles of Nifleheim #2

The manor blueprints of the Empire of nobility are described in the book. After ages, it is unknown whether they are usable.

Rotten Dragon Bones:

Durability: 250/250.

Large amounts of dragon bone. In the past, it was speculated to be harder than Mithril due to its own mana supply, but as of now, it is extremely corrosive. Even so, it is unparalleled against normal ores as precious material.

Blacksmiths will garner exceptional experience from handling

the dragon bones.

First class blacksmith item.

Options:

Helps raise blacksmith skill.

When crafting a weapon, poison attack will be added.

Can create armor with specialized resistance.

Slightly foul odor.

Ancient Shield:

Durability 300/300. Defense 86.

Old shield crafted with a delicate touch. Never before been used. Made of Mithril and unknown animal bones. Originally possessing a shiny mirror-like surface that captured light, grime now covers it after many years. Due to deep corrosion after being stored for too long, it is beyond any further repair.

Restrictions:

Priests cannot use it.

Level 400.

Must be able to utilize shields.

Options:

- 40% Physical Defense.

- 35% Magic Resistance.

- 30 Agility.
- +45 Fighting Spirit.
- All combat related stats rise by 7.
- Increases additional effect of skills by 20%.
- Chance to confuse the enemy.
- Control over undead enhanced by 25. When durability is reduced, cannot be repaired.

Four types of items were left behind by the Bone Dragon.

Refused to abandon even a single item!

Particularly the ancient shield, an exceptional unique class item. Tremendous defense was extremely helpful in battles.

Because it cannot be repaired, it will be abandoned when durability runs out.

“Given its extremely high durability, I suppose I can use it for a few months at least.”

If it is not used in normal hunting, it can be used for even longer periods of time.

Items that cannot be repaired are difficult to deal with. Every time it is used, your nerves are on edge as its durability decreases.

People look separately for rare items at relatively cheap prices,

but given the Ancient Shield's degree of defense and many options, it could be sold at an expensive value.

“The rotten dragon bones can contribute considerably to blacksmith skills and it can create a lot of necessary equipment to wear or sell.”

Weed made a heartfelt smile as he slowly descended down the hill and entered the cave he saw the Bone Dragon emerge from.

Creepy cave.

A cave made with ice as clear as glass.

“So this is the source of the cold.”

After being sent to the north, it was the first time in a while that Weed encountered such a cold place.

“If this drags on too long, I'll freeze to death.”

Weed hastened his pace as he walked into the cave. The deeper he entered, the colder it got.

Paintings were drawn on the walls.

Knights of the Nifleheim Empire appeared to be fighting

monsters. Vivid scenes depicted knights and wizards attacking their way through hordes of monsters.

The last figure was a blue robed wizard opening a box containing some beads.

Then all the monsters and humans froze.

Looking at the paintings, Weed speculated.

“Is it talking about the final battle of the Nifleheim Empire?”

Not far away at the end of the cave were boxes placed side by side.

Heavy iron boxes.

The inscribed patterns revealed them to be noble Nifleheim Empire treasures.

‘Jackpot.’

Weed stretched out his hand.

The box is locked. A key is required.

Severe tremors sprang up on Weed’s skull bone.

‘No way... they can’t be serious. I don’t think so.’

Weed once again tried to force the box open.

However, it did not go as planned.

The box is locked. A key is required.

Adventurer or thief’s unlocking skill!

It was an essential skill for opening closed doors and boxes. But there was no such skill for Weed.

Cursed with the job of Moonlight Sculptor, there were no skills from the adventurer series.

‘This damn job, it’s so fucking useless!’

Weed struggled to beat the sadness. However, near the boxes was a small paper. Weed read through it.

Events chronicling the last six years of the Nifleheim Empire.

Our Nifleheim Empire was invaded by hordes of monsters.

Northern forests, there is no doubt the monsters descended from the dark forests.

The burning imperial capital collapsed.

Loyal Knights and Soldiers laid down their lives, but it was not enough to handle that many monsters.

Thus, as a last resort, we lead the monsters into the center of the valley.

Serbian Witch's Broken Beads.

Passed down from generation to generation within the Empire's Royal Family, the cursed object used to fight monsters.

And finely wrapped inside the paper was a golden key. Weed opened the boxes right away with the key.

The first box contained gold and jewels filled to the brink. The gold sparkled and the jewels dazzled.

'That's gotta be at least 150,000 gold.'

No matter how powerful you may be, you cannot overlook treasure.

Weed pocketed all the treasures inside the box without reserve.

-Current weight has exceeded strength capacity.

Penalty: 59% increase in stamina consumption rate.

In the second box, various materials were gathered.

Ores for blacksmith handling as well as cloth and leather for sewing.

‘Nothing must be left behind.’

-Current weight has exceeded strength capacity.

Penalty: 78% increase in stamina consumption rate.

The third box contained weapons and armors of the Nipelheim Empire.

Old antique weapons sprinkled with dust. With rusted blades, a terrible performance was sure to follow.

The clothes were also outdated and seemed to crumble when touched.

“Even old clothes can be used well!”

Weed pocketed them too.

Within the last remaining box contained the Serbian Witch’s

broken beads.

The goal of the expedition!

From the Serbian Witch's Broken Beads flowed an unimaginable chill.

Weed was well aware that he had to give up on the beads.

If you are able to sell, you can get quite a lot of money, but rather, life was more precious.

“The moment I touch that I die.”

Serbian Witch's Broken Beads possessed incredible ice magic. The body would be turned to ice as a side effect from touching it without protection.

Thus, in order to prevent the worst, he had to abandon his excessive greed.

“Too bad though.”

Weed glared at the Serbian Witch's Broken Beads.

Special combat capability object not classified as japtan, but it was also the item targeted by the expedition.

Cannot help lingering regrets.

“It’s gotta be a unique item at least... contrary to rumors, you could possess a skill even if you have no knowledge about it.”

You risk your life to grab it, but with every step, you move towards death meaning you cannot move.

“Should I pick it up anyway?”

Weed was greedy as expected.

When facing dead ghosts, caution should be used.

He took the small beads close at hand. Extremely slow speed.

Hwaaaag!

Then a chill poured out from the Serbian Witch’s broken beads.

-Due to the cold, paralyzed for 13 seconds.

After paralysis is released, likely chance of developing a cold increases by 25%.

Degree of cold!

"Ah-choo!"

Weed was finally able to give up on the beads.

In fact, even if he obtained them, he would have no other option but to lay the object upon the altar of Gods to fend off the heat in the continent.

Although devoted to the expedition for only a while, Weed still belonged to it so his contribution would be rewarded nonetheless.

Weed waited until the paralysis was released and escaped from the cave. There was considerable burden on his footsteps upon leaving.

*

Hall of Fame!

The number of viewers increased exponentially until it exceeded one million. Considering each broadcaster and their real time relay, there were at least 20 million viewers.

"Hugelgelgel!"

“Where is my head?”

“Humans. So many living humans I want to eat.”

Unbelievable battle of the undead.

- That's necromancer magic?
 - I never thought creepy undead would have so much advantage in battle.
 - Corpses continue to pile up, creating more undead servants...
- Through the video, the Necromancer job exploded in popularity.

Whenever the army of undead monsters led by Weed dominated, the forums erupted in cheers.

But after the monsters overwhelmed the expedition, not many people that could continue to fight remained.

- Seems really difficult.
- It's too hard, even for Weed. The Bone Dragon's really strong.
- Goddamn it. If not for the betrayal...
- Still, it was a wonderful battle.

Nothing was expected of Weed because it was simply too unreasonable.

The activities of the undead army and the Geomchis were of such great quality that many were satisfied for a long time.

However, it did not pan out as they expected.

Out of nowhere, an Ice Dragon appeared!

The glorious fight scene where Bingryong got entangled with the Bone Dragon was unforgettable.

“Please. Please!”

They were praying to the Hall of Fame movie with Drum and the wizards.

In order for the expedition to succeed, they had to somehow catch the Bone Dragon.

When it did not fall, they were horrified.

Then Weed appeared holding the Dark Spear as he flew in the air on a Wyvern.

It was tricky to fly through the air on Wyverns. It was extremely difficult to do it while using magic simultaneously, but this was only part of it.

No matter what attack, the Bone Dragon's bones were not expected to shatter.

In the forums there was a huge uproar unlike any other.

- It never happened when Oberon and the other warriors hit the Bone Dragon. What the hell is its level?

- It looks to be over at least 400.

- How did he do that? Using magic to inflict physical damage, I can't believe its health would drop like that!

- So far the Bone Dragon had weakened considerably from the battle, but to damage the body to the point of breaking was totally unexpected.

Stats, levels and skill mastery, it is natural to use them as reference points to some extent.

The scene Weed showed in the video broadcast was so unbelievable to such an extent that it shut the mouths of all the viewers.

But they soon uncovered the reason. Weed was seen repeatedly hitting only a certain area in succession.

- Attack the same point! That will increase the damage dealt.

- Cryptanalysis, it increases damage and thoroughly neutralizes the opponent's defense. Theoretically it's possible, but I can't believe he can use it in practice like that!

- Does hitting in one place really make your damage stronger?

- Did he really hit that one point only?

Some people showed up and addressed the questions.

- In my experience, I somehow attacked the same place and it did additional damage. It was so amazing that I've been trying again after that but to no avail.

- You must hit the point perfectly again. If there is even the slightest error, it will most likely fail.

- This is usually not applicable to petite monsters. It is easier when dealing with large, sluggish monsters because you're more likely to weaken specific areas with the same attack.

People looked closely at Weed's actions. Indeed, unerringly he repeatedly struck only one point.

While in the air on a Wyvern, he quickly wielded his weapon and precisely hit the same position!

It was by no means an easy task.

Using all his power to wield his weapon and hit only one point exactly. Perfectly chopping, swinging and stabbing continuously.

Lightning attacks with incredible precision!

Excellent flexibility and movement, it was a fabulous technique.

- Well...

- That's Weed-nim.

Every time the Bone Dragon's bones shattered, admiration came out.

And finally at the end of the struggle when the Bone Dragon died, thrill and excitement filled the air.

It felt like a lie that the humongous and dangerous monster died.

The expedition, Bingryong, the Wyverns and the vampire Tori all attacked, but it was Weed who finished the Bone Dragon off.

At the sight of the incredible reality, the survivors of the expedition stood there dumbfounded.

Weed in the meantime moved slowly. He entered a cave inside Death Valley and after a while came out, walking slowly away from the snow covered ground.

Lonely and reclusive shoulders of an adventurer.

Far away, he left heavy footsteps as he departed.

Those still alive from the expedition woke up and began to move. In the cave they saw Weed enter, they discovered the open box with the Serbian Witch's broken beads.

Chapter 6: Birthday Party

Lee Hyun accessed the internet. He checked out the response on several different websites, including the Royal Road website.

“It’s in an uproar.”

The number of posts increased far more than usual, including on the Hall of Fame.

Over half of them were discussions about Weed.

- Weed! Weed appeared again!

- I was a user from the Continent of Magic. Weed has appeared, once again, to make a legend in Royal Road? As we expected of him.

- The God of War, Weed!

- It’s probably not going to be long from now. 1-2 monster groups have increased their influence and activity throughout the continent.

- I believe that it’s in response to Weed.

- Have to see Weed’s quest. It’s unbelievable.

- It was difficult to fight the dragon, would have they succeeded if Weed hadn't been there?

- When will the broadcasters rerun it?

A considerable number showed admired him.

- I just saw all of Weed's fight. How do you learn to attack like that?

- In my opinion, it seems to be a master level of martial arts. I guess you have to concentrate all the attacks.

- I succeeded against an elephant!

- Theoretically, hitting the same point more than 10 times will increase the damage 2 times, and it seems to be able to increase up to 3 times more damage.

- The additional damage to stack differently depending on the type of weapon.

- I think you don't need to do this for general hunting though.

- It's too tough to be picky. It's unreasonable to only attack the same spot since it would increase the hunting time.

It was not easy to attack the same spot over and over in the middle of a life-threatening battle. In that situation, being greedy would result in taking a lot of damage!

- So Weed's class is a necromancer.

- What are some of the Necromancer skills?

The necromancer class was becoming more popular.

This was not bad for Lee Hyun.

“Bar Khan's Tome and the Saint's Staff will worth more money if a lot of people start to convert to Necromancer.”

For first job of the wizard class, the cost of weapons and items were very expensive. There was an item scarcity because they were different from warrior weapons that could be obtained from hunting monsters. It was not easy for blacksmiths to craft wizard weapons. Blacksmithing skills needed to be at least intermediate to learn how to craft them and then it required several special materials such as Blessed Wood.

Therefore, the supply of items was far lower than the demand for it. In other words, not only was it expensive to buy but it was difficult to purchase an entire set for their class.

“In about 5 months I should get a decent price if I sell.”

Lee Hyun decided to use the items while waiting.

For some items, like the Ancient Shield should be sold quickly as the durability declined over time but that was not something he wanted to do.

The Ancient Shield had a limitation attached. If he placed it in an auction, there would be very few users that were over level 400 and there would not be much competition over it.

“If I had sold the items made from the dragon bones I’m sure I would have made a lot of money.”

Lee Hyun could not conceal his regret.

“The Ancient Shield just had to have the special option of not being able to be repaired...”

If repair had been possible, then selling it would have been a good idea since a lot of people would want it. Regretfully, he was unable to acquire the rest of the treasures of the ancient Nifleheim Empire.

“It they could have been repaired then they would have sold for a lot in antique shops and large cities like the capital.”

Lee Hyun skimmed through the rest of the post on the Hall of Fame. A high level adventurer party was challenging the Land of the Exiles.

- Does anyone know about the Village of the Trees? There has not been anyone that has been able to complete the quest yet.

Join us and we can be the first ones to complete it!

Their public declaration to challenge the Shadow Lands!

In addition, they would put up quite the challenge.

Plenty of well-known high level players sent their requests for the challenge.

More than 300 players signed up for the expedition.

“Ha, these guys are trying to do the quest without knowing anything.”

A fair number of people criticized the challenge but their comments were dismissed as useless.

The quest was described in detail, asking to find something or hunt some monsters that appeared somewhere. Lee Hyun considered the information and the value of the money to be earned. The quest did not state the rewards for joining!

“No point in working for nothing...”

Physical labor was the basis of all quests. Information about the monsters was pretty useless. Even if you searched the internet it wouldn't help much. People were still searching for fresh information about various hunting grounds.

Knowledge is power!

Some information would be conveniently kept unknown.

“I'll check through my mail.”

Lee Hyun was roughly reading through his mail.

Ttiring!

A new mail has been received from a family member.

There were very few people in his address book and it could only be either his grandmother or his sister that sent the message.

“Who?”

Lee Hyun looked to see that the mail had been sent by his grandmother.

“What’s going on?”

Lee Hyun clicked on the mail.

Lee Hyun, My waist is okay now and it doesn’t hurt anymore.

The hospital is very comfortable.

You’ve seen the old lady in hospital room 203, haven’t you? Her grandson brought a massage machine as a gift. Moreover, it has shoulder massage options and it can also heat up and cool down. I have never received anything like that. Do not worry about it. I do not mind.

*

Chung Il Hoon, as usual, asked them coldly.

“Today is the day. We have planned for this, are you ready?”

Choi Jong Bom nodded frightfully.

“We need to be perfectly prepared. Two, no three times the amount will be necessary.”

“How about only once...”

“That will create an absolute mess of the plan.”

Chung Il Hoon eyes dimmed. He had trouble believing Choi Jong Bom’s words who had payed for the other brothers before.

“It certainly would, wouldn’t it?”

“If necessary I will lead.”

Choi Jong Bom could feel his heart being smashed. Next to him however, was Chung Il Hoon smiling brightly.

“Brother, you’re not planning to do that are you?”

“That’s right. Unless we carry it out, we will never succeed.”

Nevertheless, Chung Il Hoon did not change his countenance.

“You know the emphasis of today’s importance.”

“I do.”

He nodded his head.

It was Lee Hyun’s birthday today.

Since he had never once had a birthday party ever since the day he was born, they wanted to give their brother the best birthday party ever!

‘Isn’t it such a moving sight?’

Both of them trembled. Without a doubt they would share a meaningful experience.

They did not mind that they were going to use some of their income.

They were going to get to meet with female college students!

It was everything they could ever hope for in their dreams.

It was also a good opportunity since Ahn Hyundo was on a business trip.

Chung Il Hoon said again.

“Everyone do your best. If all goes well then it should succeed. How many years do you think that we have left of our lives?”

“Maybe about 50 years or so?”

“Yeah, during that time you have to eat meals by yourself and sleep alone when you’re tired...So keep in mind that depending on how things work out today, you may either live alone for 50 years or with a harmonious family.”

The expressions on Choi Jong Bom, Ma Sang Bom, and Roi Lee’s faces changed.

Chung Il Hoon was able to give them some courage.

‘The plan is incredible. It was able to make those kids willing to help out!’

They always went to ask for help.

Ever since they started Royal Road, they would always ask Pale for help.

Since they knew it was Lee Hyun’s birthday, they promised to come.

‘The girls were difficult to get.’

Lynn, known as Hwaryeong promised to come have lunch.

Kim In Young; known as Irene, Yeon Hee Park; known as Romuna, and Yoon Soo Park; known as Surka, would all come in the evening because of family reasons.

‘This will be an enjoyable birthday.’

Chung Il Hoon gave a satisfying laugh.

*

Lee Hyun visited the dojo early today to train.

But without knowing what his brothers were planning, they brought him somewhere else.

“Let’s go!”

Dojo Instructor! In addition they were joined by a massive number of 70 practitioners with hardened faces, eyes, and overflowing courage.

“Brothers where are we going?”

Lee Hyun asked in a low voice.

Roi Lee replied in a grim voice.

“Going to the amusement park.”

“What are we going for? Are you going to fight?”

“We’re going to go on rides and play games. Even we have rest day sometimes, don’t you think? Go along with it.”

“Yes.”

Lee Hyun shook his head.

Even if they were going to the amusement park, the facial expressions of the people going did not fit with it. A heavy atmosphere was made as they passed by.

‘Do not fail.’

‘Happy birthday, birthday.’

It was too heavy of a responsibility to remain calm. They were carefully dressed in black suits, feeling vaguely uncomfortable and awkward.

The group rode on the subway. The dojo owned a vehicle for transportation, but they deliberately decided to use the subway.

‘People going to amusement parks use public transportation.’

None of the practitioners or instructors have been to an

amusement park since they were kids. Consulting the internet, there was going to be a lot of traffic and other transportation would be recommended. With that in mind, they decided to board the subway.

“Hey, today are we going to your house to play some games?”

“Last night I was dancing at the club with a guy...and I held hands with him!”

There was a deep silence in the subway as the cars were filled with broad sturdy shouldered men in black suits.

“...”

The students from before and the all the men stopped talking. When there were many passengers on the subway there was bound to be a fierce battle over the seats. The struggle for more comfortable seats!

But some people stood quietly in place. Everyone didn't know what was happening.

“Keuheum, it feels more comfortable to stand.”

“Yea, it's better to exercise...”

40 to 50 men stood in place. Even the elderly seated nearby were

getting worried.

“Huh? Why are they standing?”

“Yeah.”

Roi Lee and Ma Sang Bom did not sit down in any of the seats. Being accustomed to comfort made the body increasingly weak. It was necessary to work the body out everywhere. Therefore, it was normal for them to stand around in public transportation. The instructors and the practitioners stood alongside the ordinary people.

‘Are these guys mafia? The look in their eyes...’

‘It looks like their muscles are going to tear through their suits.’

‘I think they’re going to do something illegal.’

‘The police. I think it would be a good idea to call the police...’

When they arrived at a station, the subway doors opened.

“Huh, there’s empty seats?”

“That’s not very common. Maybe we’re lucky this time.”

The new passengers were delighted to see the empty seats, but then they saw the practitioners.

“....”

The passengers stood around quietly. They would not dare to sit down looking at the hard faces of the instructors and practitioners.

‘Why does it feel so bad to take a seat?’

‘I would rather sit down. Then I can be comfortable.’

More passengers were forced to be worried. However, the practitioners could not afford to care.

They needed to entertain Lee Hyun somehow!

They did wonder about the people standing for a bit, but they didn’t care so that was overlooked.

‘It must be some kind of fad to stand around in subways huh?’

‘Come to think of it, it’s good for their health.’

Nobody sat down in the subway until the group had reached their destination.

“Lee Hyun, over here!”

“This way!”

In front of the main entrance of the amusement park.

Hayan, Oh Dongman, Shin Hye Min, Lynn, and Choi Ji Hoon were waiting together.

“Hayan, what are you doing here?”

Lee Hyun asked weirdly. He noticed that there was something strange that he wasn't informed of.

Other than the abnormal behavior of the practitioners, Oh Dongman, and Jae Lynn, he did not expect to see Choi Ji Hoon.

Hayan opened her mouth and smiled.

“Oppa, It's your birthday today!”

“Birthday?”

Lee Hyun began to calculate the date. It was indeed his birthday. Since he never celebrated his birthday, he had forgotten.

“Isn't that why we're here for your birthday?”

“Oppa has never gone to an amusement park before so...”

“I mean, amusement parks are exclusive to the wealthy...”

Jae Lynn, Oh Dongman, and Shin Hye Min were puzzled at Lee Hyun’s words.

‘When did amusement parks become reserved for the upper class?’

The instructors and the practitioners took it quite literally.

“In fact, you don't go to an amusement park unless you make a modest amount of money. It’s a big decision about whether or not to go.”

“A lone martial artist in an amusement park...”

“Isn’t it more than 5000 won a ride?”

The instructors spend a considerable amount of their money. For room and board in the dojo, they don’t make much money to spend. Therefore it was difficult for them to spend more than 10,000 to 20,000 won for something.

Lee Hyun sat down, since whenever he spent money on something, even going on rides, his heart broke a little.

“Keuheum! I prefer just relaxing at home.”

Hayan grabbed Lee Hyun’s arm and led him inside.

“I already have a free pass. This way you can play games and go on rides for free.”

Hayan already knew what to do with Lee Hyun. Since he disliked wasting time and money, with this he would not have an excuse not to go. The others followed after Lee Hyun in an instant.

Shin Hye Min asked them.

“What do you want to ride first?”

Jae Lynn didn’t waste any time.

“The Viking? Or the roller coasters?”

Roller coasters were high speed mechanisms that move along the rails in the air. It was the most popular rides.

Shin Hye Min was mentally tired from constantly being busy with the daily broadcast and secretly wanted to taste the thrill of the ride.

“Let’s go on the roller coaster first right?”

Ride the roller coaster first!

A considerable number of people visited the park in the earlier hours so thanks to this they can get their turn sooner.

Lee Hyun sat in the front with Jae Lynn, followed by Oh Dongman and Shin Hye Min, and Hayan and Choi Ji Hoon was paired together.

This was unavoidable because of the guy to girl ratio.

‘That’s great.’

Today was the first time that Ji Hoon had met Lee Hyun’s younger sister.

Not just hunting and exploring in Royal Road. It was different meeting her in reality.

In other words, he was attracted to her.

He had met with numerous women, but he had never felt emotions like this before.

‘Doing this and spending the rest of the day with her. Yeah, not

bad.'

Ji Hoon had a bright smile.

Then he receive a light tap on his shoulder from Ma Sang Bom.

“Watch your back.”

“What?”

“Recognize who that is first...”

The horror hit Ji Hoon in the face.

“Hooo hoo hoo.”

At this Roi Lee smiled.

The practitioners did not try to get close to Hayan, since it risked their lives.

To them, Ji Hoon seemed pretty cool.

Then the roller coaster went up to the top and when it came down Oh Dongman, Shin Hye Min, Jae Lynn, Hayan, and Ji Hoon all began screaming.

“Kyaaaah!”

“Wheee!”

Lee Hyun and the practitioners were more blasé about it.

‘It was really scary when I was sculpting Bingryong's head.’

Sculpting chunks of ice hundred of meters high and hanging on a single wire. The body hangs there, with the wind constantly interfering. Compared to that experience, sitting here could be thought of as medicine.

The instructors were also calm.

“The angle needs to be steeper...”

“If we fell from here, even in the worst situation we could be okay if you give up the legs.”

“We can reduce the falling speed by rotating the body a few times to diminish the force.”

“Can we jump off from here?”

Talking about such things was scary in its own way.

Thanks to that, a few people were screaming because of the bizarre roller coaster ride!

‘What on earth are you?’

The people in charge of the rides wondered.

On the Viking, the same thing happened.

Lee Hyun and the practitioners sat still doing nothing. Same as the first ride without any change.

‘Oh this isn’t worth my money! Since I’m not using money, I need to enjoy this.’

But Lee Hyun still looked angry.

Eventually they gave up on the longer rides.

“If he’s not scared of the rides then we have to go on something else.”

Jae Lynn said unfortunately.

It was a long way from Lee Hyun and the practitioners to enjoy the thrill and suspense of the amusement park.

Then Oh Dongman had an idea.

“Instead of going on the rides...what if we go to the zoo?”

Hayan’s eyes twinkled in expectation.

“The zoo?”

“Yes, this place is very big but so is the zoo. Wouldn’t it be more fun than sitting in a wheel as it spins?”

“Undoubtedly.”

So, changing their goals, the group decided to go to the zoo this time.

*

There was a giraffe.

Kids that were barely six years old were watching the giraffes.

A kindergarten group had come to watch.

Small and cute boys shouted.

“Look, it’s a giraffe!”

“It looks so cool.”

The pretty young girls smiled with bright eyes.

“It’s beautiful.”

“The animals are so cute. Whoa! Look at it’s long neck!”

It was a harmonious sight.

They were peacefully walking around with the giraffes.

Then an insidious voice came from behind!!

“Giraffes, are they tasty?”

“It may be uncomfortable since we may need to cook it for a long time.”

“But with some salt, it may be quite delicious to eat. The other day, I was training in Africa. I was so hungry. If I could have caught a lion, then I would have eaten it.”

“Do you feel comfortable eating herbivorous animals?”

“We can come and get it at night...”

Sseueuk!

The instructors and the practitioners!

They were looking at the giraffes while they talked.

“Waaaa oooooohh aaahhhh!”

This made the kids cry.

The completely innocent area was completely destroyed by them.

The instructors and the practitioners had to go to the other side.

Camels and ponies.

“Hey, what do these guys taste like?”

“I think I’ll have fun choosing what to eat.”

“It may be a good idea to bake and eat it.”

They looked at the polar bear while blatantly showing off their distasteful appetite.

“Well, look at him.”

“Wow, looking at it makes my mouth water”

“Gallbladders and feet...it eats whatever they throw him. If someone ate it, they could eat nonstop for a year...”

The instructors’ and the practitioners’ eyes shone with blood.

To such a degree that even the polar bear fled in fear.

The otters, the dolphins and the crocodiles suffered the same fate. Understandably, it was even worse for the birds.

But it didn’t include the expected animals.

Monkeys, gorillas, pigs!

The practitioners liked watching their sweet antics and bananas.

“Somehow I like it.”

“I just can’t seem to stop looking.”

Lee Hyun enjoyed the zoo.

It has been so long since he had taken a break.

He had never taken a break after he had started Royal Road. The thought of taking a day off was unbearable since monthly fees were expensive. However he did not regret coming to the zoo with his sister and friends.

“Someday I will visit here with my family again.”

That would be in 10, or maybe 20 years.

But now he was peaceful and happy.

Even when it was time to leave, Lynn refused to leave Lee Hyun's side.

She was on a quest to get closer to him so that they could be lovers.

Oh Dongman, Shin Hye Min and Ji Hoon tried to stay as estranged as possible from the instructors and practitioners.

“Not everyone wants to know what they like...”

“Let’s walk farther away from them.”

“We don’t know them.”

*

They left the amusement park by public transportation and returned to the dojo.

The last plan of Lee Hyun’s birthday party was completed.

A meat party with pork ribs and pork belly!

Kim In Young, Yeon Hee Park and Yoon Soo Park served the precious meat.

“Bon appetit.”

“Thank you, young lady.”

Ma Sang Bom took the dripping greasy meat wrapped in lettuce and put it in his mouth.

“You just have to eat meat for a birthday.”

The instructors had set up the meat for the end of Lee Hyun's birthday party.

The amusement park was to be followed with meat!

This is what they were planning when they set up the birthday party.

Choi Jong Bom diligently picked up a piece of cooked meat with a stroke of his chopstick.

“Meat is more delicious when you eat it with others.”

Roi Lee also struck onto that comment.

“The more people there are, the tastier it is.”

The birthday party was neither at a nice restaurant nor did they prepare any special gift, but it was a warm experience nevertheless.

Chung Il Hoon brought out the soju.

“Here, take a cup of liquor.”

Lee Hyun listened to him and carefully took the cup with both hands. Chung Il Hoon filled up Lee Hyun's cup with soju

accordingly.

“To our lives!”

“To life!”

The men gave a clumsy toast. Looking at everything, Hayan was the one that planned everything in advance.

A group meeting with college woman!

Chapter 7: High Elf Bow

Weed returned to the Versailles Continent after two real life days. In the Versailles Continent, six days had passed by.

“Oooh, we drink to him.”

Drinking alcohol was common for laborers. After a hard day of work, they were loosening up with a few glasses of liquor. One bottle of wine after another and the atmosphere would be considerably friendlier. But here they were drinking all of the previous night. Weed was with Pale and Maylon, who were both weak against alcohol. He didn't even want to mention Zephyr.

“It was a bad idea to bring soju.”

They drank for over four hours with over 200 boxes of soju. Words could not describe the fearsome sight. The number of practitioners, no matter how many, could not be human to consume so much alcohol.

He would have wanted to be unconscious instead of being awake.

“Now that we're finally back, we're still suffering from a bad hangover.”

Weed looked around.

A cave in a safe location not too far from the valley of death. Alveron slowly stood up from his prayer.

“Weed-nim have you just returned?”

“Yeah.”

Weed had returned to human from a Skeleton Soldier.

Night had fallen and the wolves became active.

Alveron was inside the cave. Since it was well hidden, the wolves were not able to find it.

“Moreover... I wonder what happened to the expedition?”

Weed wondered about the Serbian Witch’s Broken Beads.

*

After such an arduous climb, Oberon and the Cold Roses Guild could not catch their breath after walking all night to the town of the altar of the Edereune God, stopping only to eat. At the end of it all they could finally reap the fruit of their efforts.

Run down houses with broken walls. The desolate village was entirely in ruins. The wind was blowing over the town of

Edereune, but the members of the expedition felt that their troubles would soon be over.

The small dwarf Oberon climbed over the rocks.

“Here is Edereune, the final destination of the expedition. Everyone I want to thank you for following and believing me, though I may be lacking.”

“Captain, even though we ran into trouble, we did succeed and it was rewarding.”

All of the Cold Roses member in the expedition nodded.

‘I doubted coming to the northern expedition a few times since it seemed in vain.’

‘This is the first time that I put up with such a troublesome quest for such a long time.’

They were now unspeakably thrilled since they managed to finish such a difficult quest. The eyes of the people in the expedition sparkled with excitement in anticipation of what happens next.

Oberon was close to the end of his speech.

“I would like to thank all of you...Drum.”

“Yes, Leader.”

“Restore the item.”

Drum removed the cherished treasure from his inventory.

Serbian Witch’s Broken Beads!

It was obtained from the center of the continent; a treasure obtained after the end of countless battles, now to be locked in the north.

In the center were the broken beads. From the cracks of the broken beads was a constant chilling cold.

Everyone in the expedition was trembling from the cold. If it had not been for Drum weakening the strength of the beads then they would have frozen to death.

Drum presented the beads to Charon.

“Thank you.”

Charon did not even dare touching the beads. Since he was an enchanter that dealt mainly with jewelry, the beads effects would curse him.

“I accept.”

“I am sorry for making you do this.”

“Dwell on it later and buy me a drink.”

“I will.”

Charon looked at the Serbian Witch’s Beads.

“Identify!”

Ttiring!

Witch’s Broken Beads.Durability : 1.

Made of an unknown material. Originally it contained a great force.

Due to the cracks, that force has erupted outside.

The beads are a source of incessant chill.

Options:

Restore the beads to seal the cold.

The Enchanter class had to ability to use magic to grant power to gems and minerals. They were very rare since it required a large amount of effort to get a high skill level.

That was Charon, and he was a high level wizard.

“Damn it! This honor is not that honorable.”

Charon touched the broken beads.

“Restore the marbles!”

A hand shone dazzlingly as the cracks were neatly repaired.

Enchanter job skills.

The ability to revert the durability of magical gems and materials to the original value.

The cold chill from the breads that was extending indefinitely disappeared mysteriously at that moment.

“Ohh!”

“Now I can finally stop holding my breath.”

From then on, everyone in the expedition was able to breathe much easier.

The numbness left their hands as the cold went away. Charon, from the instant he touched it with his hands, turned into ice but the Serbian Witch's Broken Beads were intact.

“Save him, resurrect him somehow!”

“God damn it!”

They checked around but most of the clerical classes had already lost their lives.

From the staircase the expedition could see the surrounding landscape.

Since the cracks were fixed, a warm Northern wind blew.

They turned their eyes slightly towards the sky to see a slight rainfall.

A little warm rain.

However it seemed that the ice would not be melted. His character was alive and trapped with his health bar turned blue.

“Later on, I’ll buy whatever you want.”

Drum’s voice cracked as he spoke and then he turned to the Witch’s Smooth Beads.

At that moment, some scenes from inside the beads were shown.

In an area with a surrounding landscape of a thick layer of snow.

The young girl had to learn magic.

Whenever the girl used magic, tiny snowflakes were born. Sometimes small chunks of ice were made.

Every time she succeeded with her magic, the girl smiled.

Serbian Witch.

Perhaps it was the girl’s inner talent. The girl’s skills grew increasingly.

The young cute little girl wore a robe. She was too small for it at first, but eventually it fit her.

However, she had heard that proper mages used staves.

After a while, invaders set foot onto the peaceful snowy land.

A legion of monsters fought against human soldiers.

The Serbian Witch fought against the enemies.

Monsters would freeze whenever she used her magic. Human soldiers could not withstand the cold and died as well.

The legend of the Serbian Witch spread throughout the continent!

In the history of the Versailles Continent, there once was a legendary master of Ice Magic.

Wind and rain heralded the coming of a storm. The Serbian Witch would wave her hand and everything froze.

The ice type magic, Freezing Storm!

- The magic of the Serbian Ice Witch has been restored. Forcefully altering the climate to subdue enemies. Those familiar with ice based magic can now learn advanced magic.

“Ah!”

Drum sighed.

Serbian Witch's Broken Beads. They had managed to restore the beads. Now it was possible to learn new types of magic without the need of a spellbook or materials. The beads contained the skills for highly advance ice magic. For Drum, a professional ice mage, it was one of the best magical treasures.

Oberon approached him and put his hands on his shoulder.

“There'll be another chance.”

Drum lamented for a while.

“I'll have a chance again?”

“Perhaps...”

“ ... ”

The beads were obtained by the expedition after a lot of hardship.

Drum inevitably raised the Witch Beads to the altar of the gods.

*

The live internet feed ended at sunset as the expedition dedicated

the beads to the altar.

It was not just in reality. Taverns all across the continent of Versailles with magical screens installed could see the footage.

“The heat wave is going to disappear?”

“How could they do this?”

People had already given up trying to adjust to the heat.

They found it incredibly hard to believe that the heat would be gone so easily.

Nevertheless, they had some expectations.

At that moment, there was no event more important than this.

The Witch's Beads disintegrated into dust when they were placed on that altar. However, the powers within the beads began to cycle and create its impact on the entire continent.

The sweltering heat caused by the Curse of the Scorpion King on the continent began to change.

The atmospheric temperature lowered until it was how it used to be.

A refreshing breeze blew past, cooling the lukewarm beers.

“Bravo.”

“Cheers.”

Many people threw festivals, indulging in their excitement over the success.

You could see people yelling in pleasure across almost every city or town in the Versailles continent.

Weed rode on the Wyverns with Alveron and took to the skies. They were escorted by Bingryong. They had left to check on the remnants of the Valley of Death.

The place was teeming with monsters.

“Kyawoo. It’s a human!”

“Kill him!”

Weed shook his head.

“Looks like it’s gone.”

The Valley of Death was covered in snow and ice.

The sun was in the sky, but it did not feel hot and a warm breeze blew. Since the Serbian Witch Beads had been restored, chilling air no longer permeated from the cracks.

The source of the curse.

The heat wave that covered the entire continent was proving extremely useful.

The snow and ice, that never seemed to melt, dissolved instantly into water. Because of the Valley of Death, it flowed through like the rapids. But because the land was so barren, it quickly sucked up the moisture that was being offered.

“Gaaahh! The heat! It’s burning my body! Master!”

Bingryong was suffering as he struggled to beat his wings in the sky. Droplets of water dripped and fell from his body of ice.

For most people the increasing temperature was a blessing, but to Bingryong it led to weakening his strength.

“Please, spare me. Master.”

Bingryong was overwhelmed with pain and tears. His eyes held the most heartbreaking glance.

“Useless!”

His penetrating glance told Bingryong to knock it off. This much was not enough to be out of breath. Even with the hot weather, he would not be pampered. Even with his tremendous Stamina and Health, he struggled with his wings. It takes a lot of time to recover. He was weakened even more so, considering that it had not been long since his battle with the other dragon.

Weed finally messaged Seoyoon.

A normal person would never pretend to be unable to speak!

“Since she hasn't messaged me, she must have found a decent quest or a good hunting ground.”

Weed nodded.

Weed guessed that Seoyoon was not a good natured person or she would not have fed poison to him when he was sick.

“I’ll see if I can contact her next time.”

Seoyoon was lingering around in Morata.

People were wandering around within the bustling town.

“The weather is getting warmer.”

“Maybe it’s time for the town to start getting some new clothes? It’s not going to be easy to work in winter clothing.”

“Monsters are going to get more active in this kind of weather. We need to get the walls repaired to stop monsters from invading.”

The townsfolk were working and talking. They were doing things from smithing farming tools to making fabric for clothes.

Productivity in Morata had increased significantly because of the recent festival and many houses in the local area were reconstructed.

Alveron politely addressed him.

“Weed-nim, I will return to the village with the rest of the priests and assist the townspeople.”

“Thank you for all the help.”

“Yes. You can call us anytime if monsters invade.”

The village was under the protection of the Church of Freya so many priests and paladins were staying in Morata.

The village elder was roasting a sweet potatoe as Weed came back from his travels.

“Welcome back, hero-nim.”

“I have returned.”

“Are you here to turn in the commission I gave you?”

“Yes, but more than that I am hungry.”

Weed loved food.

But he did not excessively eat it. If fullness was excessively full, then stamina was quickly exhausted. However, he did not give up a situation where he could get free food!

Beggar instincts.

The ability to find food in any situation!

“To give the hero of the village a mere sweet potato...”

“That’s fine.”

“Well, the polite thing would be to serve food so...”

“Thanks, I appreciate it.”

“No, the pleasure is mine.”

The village elder, with tears in his eyes, offered him the sweet potato.

As Weed ate the sweet potato that was soaked in kimchi.

- Satiety has been filled.

Stamina has increased by 10%.

It was a simple dish of sweet potatoes.

Compared to Weed’s intermediate cooking skills, the food wasn’t very good but the effect to fully fill satiety was priceless.

Weed ate the sweet potato quickly.

“The Nifleheim Emperor did not run away. He pulled the cowardly monsters into the valley and he overpowered them with the Serbian Witch's Broken Beads.”

Ttiring!

The King's Glory quest has been completed!The Divine Emperor Nifleheim IV sacrificed himself to protect his people.But the results were not as he had wanted.

The weather in the northern lands went out of control until the Serbian Witch's Beads were restored.

- Fame has increased by 3200

- Friendship with Morata's citizens increased by 100.

- Public value points with Morata village increased by 3200. Regional public value points for Morata village can be seen in the public service values window.

- Morata village public value: 9800

- You have leveled up!

- You have leveled up!

- You have leveled up!

- You have leveled up!

- You have leveled up!

- You have leveled up!

- You have leveled up!

...

The level gain was huge, but even more so was increase in fame.

Weed thought.

‘Quests related with the honor of a kingdom are in a whole another level of rewards.’

The village elder took something wrapped in a cloth from the depths of a drawer.

“At least in the end I retain my honor as a noble of the Nifleheim Empire.”

Frankly, Weed found it a little hard to believe. A nobleman of the empire was so desperate now that he could barely keep a sweet potato for himself. But even that Weed took away from him and ate. To think this was the condition of the leader of the village.

“The day that the Empire fell, the Imperial treasures were scattered and all that remains is this bracelet. Hero-nim, since you found the fate its true owner, I feel you deserve this.”

Items earned as compensation for the quest.

It was hard to get good items such as rings, necklaces, and accessories.

Weed's heart was beating so fast as he hurried to check it.

“Identify!”

Ttring!

The King's Bracelet:

Durability 30/30.A treasure of the Nifleheim Empire. Refined beauty and a variety of magical abilities. An incredibly finely crafted piece of jewelry embedded with gems.Restrictions:

Level 450.

Reputation 100,000.

Options:

Maximum mana increased by 55%.

All stats + 15.

Mana regeneration increased by 20%.

Charm + 30.

Typically it was unassociated with combat abilities, but it had the precious option of increasing mana and regeneration so that substantially increased its value.

Much better than what Weed lost when he died.

‘Never thought I’d get something this good.’

He regretted that he didn’t get any better items from the dragon.

However, the rewards from the quest did not disappoint him.

It was incomparable to his current armor and items.

If he put the bracelet on the item trading site, it would turn the place upside down.

A considerable amount of people would start a bidding war.

The quicker the mana regen, the more often you can use skills.

You would be able to hunt and raise skill mastery faster.

He had gotten a few rings from Lavias.

Later on he had gotten the Ring of the High Priest.

Each increased his mana regeneration by 10%.

The village elder was about to finish his speech.

“Under Hero-nim’s mighty shoulders the fate of this village may be changed.”

“Yes?”

“Hero of the village, you are our glimmer of hope. Please do not refuse.”

Ttiring!

Elder’s proposal to become the Count of Morata. Morata was a renowned producer of high quality cloth and leather for generations. The True Blood Vampires took over the territory once, but now humans inhabit once more. The village elder has offered the position of ruler to one of the two heroes of the village. Great adventurers with high friendship with the people will not be able to refuse.

Able to tax crops and trade monthly. Able to strengthen military power. If the lord occupies another city or castle of a certain size or population by force, the rewards will increase.

-You have become the Count of Morata.

-The title Count of Morata is now available.

-Fame has increased by 2500.

-Charisma has increased by 30.

-Leadership has increased by 20.

Proposal cannot be denied!

Familiarity with the residents increased its effects. On the spur of the moment, he became the ruler of the province.

*

Weed went out of the village Elder's house and saw a little girl.

She was making a very small outfit.

“Oh, you are?”

“Yea. What are you doing?”

“Baby clothes. Haven’t you heard that there are a lot of kids in our town? It’s my dream to make clothes but we need to farm since we don’t have enough farmers.”

Weed nodded. Morata was historically known for its famous sewing productions.

‘That’s right. I still have the quest for having I planted flowers in the Valley of Death.’

“Have the flowers of hope chased away the spirit of death?”

“The seeds you have given me have grown into grass, flowers and trees that have soaked its surrounding around in a sweet scent.”

“Thank you, thank you very much.”

Ttiring!

You have completed the Plant Flowers quest. In the valley, flowers and trees now grow and can safely be passed without the danger of monsters. The seeds cultivated by man will spread widely by the wind and grow into a forest.

-Fame has increased by 1600.

-Friendship with Morata citizens has increased by 120. Residents will more or less heed your orders.

-Morata Village public value: 10,400

-You have leveled up.

-You have leveled up.

-You have leveled up.

Once again he leveled three times.

He was a bit disappointed. He had huge expectations of the quest. Not everyone was able to do an A ranked quest.

‘However, to think it only gave three levels.’

Weed breathed a deep sigh.

‘This is the kind of luck I have. What was I expecting.’

Still levels did not mean everything.

Leveling only meant a slight rise in stats. He would need to raise

his skill masteries and other stats or else he would end up dead later on from being underskilled!

Weed was well aware of this, but still it was a quest. At least the increase in fame and public service points were far higher than usual.

Then she said again.

“You have to wait.”

“Huh?”

“I wanted to give you something.”

She hurriedly went inside her house. Afterwards she brought out two things wrapped in paper.

A map and a bow!

“This is my friend’s map that I promised you. For helping me, please accept this bow as compensation.”

Items have been acquired as compensation for the quest.

It was a poorly drawn map that looked like a child drew it.

“Identify!”

Freely drawn map: Durability 3. A map of some place.

It seems to locate an area.

The problem was the lines on the map and the triangles for mountains.

“I have to go find this thing.”

He let out a sigh. However, the bow felt a little bit different. There seemed to be a big difference between normal bows and this bow’s materials and composition.

“Identify!”

High Elf Bow:

Durability 65/65. Damage 98. Range 18. A High Elf creates one bow in their lifetime. Due to its scarcity, the rarity of it is uncomparable. Finding elves were very difficult in the human world and even more difficult for a human to befriend one and receive this bow as a gift. Imbued with the power of Sprites. Restriction:

Level 400.

Agility 1000.

Archer related profession.

Options:

+40% chance to hit

+40% range.

User can move very rapidly.

The damage done by arrows is elemental damage.

Affinity with spirits +5%.

For a short while he didn't say anything.

‘Jackpot!’

As of yet, this was one of the most superb items!

The High Elf Bows were one of the most coveted items of the archer class.

Chapter 8: The Tower Of Light

As soon as Lee Hyun came out of the capsule, he logged onto the item trading site.

- Buying Elven Bow.
- Looking to buy an Elven Bow, regardless of whether its a dark elf bow or a wood elf bow.
- Paying large amounts for a rare or unique level 300 bow. Willing to pay a lot more than the usual market value.

The posts bombarding the board reflected the number of archers there were in the game. Prices were very high because of the limited supply.

Weed smiled at this.

‘This is good.’

The High Elf Bow!

If he placed it on the auction site then he could get a very high amount for it.

The value of level 400 weapons were high. Then there were the

various options it had on it, such as high damage and long range.

There were too many advantages on the elven weapons to count.

“With that kind of money, it would be 2 to 3 months of savings spent on living.”

Lee Hyun was excited.

He would have registered the King's Bracelet and the High Elf Bow on the auction site, but he decided not to on impulse.

It was not an exaggeration to say that unique items could be cashed in at any time.

However putting them on sale came with a price.

“Other people can't be the only ones with good items.”

The purpose of good items was to be worn and ultimately become stronger!

He decided to keep it for himself for the time being.

Instead of looking further, Lee Hyun stood up and left the house.

“It's been awhile since I've felt this good.”

Lee Hyun headed off to the supermarket.

*

The supermarket was built on the fifth floor of a department store building, with many customers coming and going.

It was highly unusual for Lee Hyun to be in this place.

‘Discount stores seem to advocate low prices but the quality is cheap.’

The usual Lee Hyun absolutely did not go to supermarkets. Generally the price of produce and poultry was expensive. With goods like meat and eggs, it could not compare to street markets. The only exception was inexpensive items and buy one get one free sales.

‘Looking around there’s a lot of useless things. Most of them are priced higher than usual.’

He could not believe his eyes. Looking at the prices, shopping at a supermarket would often exceed his budget. Even arguing its advantages that it was convenient did not make up for how much would be save from shopping at a street market. Lee Hyun came to such a store.

Lee Hyun grabbed a cart.

“Okay, time to shop!”

He was shopping to celebrate his good luck!

He chose items that you could not imagine people usually getting.

He chose a large number of inexpensive goods instead of brand names.

“Maybe two more boxes of Chewy Choco Pies. I think I should be fine with three boxes. Three boxes. Hm, maybe I should get four?”

Lee Hyun was conflicted for a moment then shook his head.

“Oh, of course. I can get four or five boxes, but four boxes will be sufficient and I bet that I won’t need more. Hahaha! These sweets are delicious.”

However, it was different for the grocery purchases.

Olive oil was twice as expensive as normal cooking oil!

He bought a container of salt that was individually packaged.

He wanted to see the difference in salt that was 200 won more

expensive!

“It’s a little bit of luxury.”

*

Every bit of Seoyoon’s gameplay was recorded by Cha Eunhee.

“I’m a little envious. It would be nice if I could go on adventures like that.”

She started to investigate Weed whenever he appeared.

It was very hard to find people that were famous on the internet.

She knew his name, but not what he was like in the past.

The only information she found was that he did unbelievable things in the Continent of Magick, and that he was now on a quest in Royal Road.

The information in front of Cha Eunhee was insane. Here was a person, with as small as a one in a million chance, that somehow got lucky and became famous worldwide.

“A great user...and he’s very famous.”

She didn't want to believe it until she saw it with her own eyes.

It was then that she found and saw the quests in the videos. Hunting down the True Blood Vampires, the creation of the pyramid, and the great battle on the Plains of Despair that everyone was talking about!

It was then that Cha Eunhee became a fan of Royal Road.

Because of this she became more enthusiastic.

“Weed really is the most favorite adventurer.”

A passion of hard work!

Cha Eunhee was immersed in the idea of drowning herself in patience in order to solve a quest.

This was true in many of Weed's adventures. Whether it was the fight against the True Blood Vampires or the Plains of Despair, he experienced and won over the tough quests. However, they were not the only important quests on the Versailles continent.

An expedition from a kingdom going to explore an unknown jungle.

Adventurers going off to explore new ruins and dungeons.

Taking on a quest to clear out a den of thieves, who were former nobles.

Traveling to new kingdoms and having thrilling adventures and quests were some of the most important elements that comprised the Versailles continent.

But Weed's adventures had something special in them that others usually did not.

That was what Cha Eunhee wanted to find out.

“Even with a step-by-step approach and passion, unforeseen circumstances will forcefully interfere with their efforts. That's why people readily give up.”

Most quests fail. With higher difficulty quests the probability of failure increases. Weed was as human as anyone else but people can't help but watch his quests.

Unexpected behavior was a unique aspect of Weed's.

Unlike most people, he solved his quests with not just his strength or levels but with something innovating.

The excitement and the tension.

The passion he had when he was commanding the Orcs and the

Dark Elves.

People were surprised with his fighting abilities, but it was the way he behaved, his spirit that fascinated people.

“He’s been gaining popularity for a reason. In the aftermath of his supremacy in the Continent of Magic, he’s now forging a new legend in Royal Road. People can’t help but look on fondly.”

Cha Eunhee had to admit it. She did not remember how many times she turned back to the scene of Weed fighting against the dragon. Most people watched it about a dozen times or more.

Weed was going to be more famous than ever.

It was then that Cha Eunhee got a surprise when she was watching a video that was in Seoyoon’s capsule.

- Friend...

Even if it was only for a single syllable, Seoyoon opened her mouth to speak.

Unless someone loved torturing themselves, Seoyoon did not want to be separated from Weed and had to speak.

Weed then responded to her words.

Seoyoon didn't have the time to say anything else.

“I guess it's been so long since she's said anything that she couldn't reply.”

Cha Eunhee felt bad for her. For someone like Seoyoon who lived for so long without speaking would forget how to talk to others. Talking would become awkward and she wouldn't want to say anything embarrassing.

*

After Pale and Romuna returned from the Yuroki Mountains they warmly welcomed Yurin.

‘So this is Weed's sister.’

Hwaryeong had not known that Yurin was his favorite family member. Everyone was a bit skeptical that Yurin was joining the party. Pale scratched his head.

“This is too dangerous...Yurin are you going to be fine coming along with us?”

As the leader of the party he asked carefully so that she could avoid getting hurt.

“Look...the Yuroki Mountains are not easy places to hunt.

There's a lot of monsters and sometimes we get killed. Wouldn't it be better if we to go to a place that helps beginners?"

Yurin thought for a moment and then shook her head.

"No, it's fine. It's better if it's more difficult."

"It's going to be really dangerous..."

"I understand. I'll just look for somewhere safe to paint the monsters."

"Well, go ahead then. Call us if you're in danger. We will protect you."

"Okay."

Yurin sat down on an empty spot and took out a bunch of painting materials.

A few moments later she drew a picture of Pale shooting a monster with arrows.

Shah syasyasyak!

Yurin moved the pencil quickly across the canvas. She then painted a piece of murderous ogres running around.

Ttiring!

-You have used drawing skills.

You have painted an ogre. A big success!

The piece has been named Ogres.The drawing has made the Ogres more brutal.-Drawing skills have improved.

With that, the Ogres evolved into named monsters.

Monsters with names are 20% stronger. However, this was done intentionally because named monsters have more experience and better drop rates.

This was a hidden skill of the painters!

“Oh, named monsters.”

“Surka, buy me some time so that I can prepare a strong magic spell.”

“Okay, Unni.”

The party had to fight fiercely against the monsters that got buffed from the painting.

Yurin began to scribble over the picture of the ogres.

She gave beards to the scarred murderous faces of the ogres. She also gave them glasses and made them hold a book as if they were conducting a performance.

-You have used the Doodle skill.

The Ogres will now become lazy and gentle natured.

The enemy is suffering from a wound on his sides. This area will be his major weakness.

Yurin was very helpful with her paintings even though she did not engage in combat. Looking at her silently hold the painting to herself, wearing her cowl hat, made people want to give her a hug.

But the images she was painting were quite bloody. It was quite a sight to see the ogres, known as the lords of the forest, being tossed around like rabbit. The heads of the ogres were skewered by 3 beautiful golden snakes.

Yurin was a very pretty girl but the picture showed the cruel reality.

Inhumane abuse!

Pale nodded a little.

‘Her brother really is Weed.’

In Yurin’s veins flowed the same blood as Weed.

*

Viewership was always rising over news about the Versailles Continent.

Oh Juwan and Shin Hye Min were on a program having a discussion with a number of experts.

“A few days ago a combat based profession player took over a castle.”

“Warriors and Knights seem to be the most popular classes to own castles. There are a few mages but they aren’t exactly many.”

“Professions that are good with leading others into combat seem to be good.”

“However, for the first time, a blacksmith has appeared with enough money to become the lord of a castle.”

The specialists for the Versailles Continent argued about their opinions.

“Impossible.”

“I have no idea how that could have been done.”

“Was it merely a coincidence? Or maybe there were special circumstances?”

Several things changed after the castle was bought.

An increasing number of residents were interested in metal. Residents would talk about metal and hand out quests related to it. Usually smelting a certain ingredient or making a special item.

The number of quests for blacksmiths were limited. Most of the time the quest was too hard for the blacksmith to complete. There was also the fact that a lack of fame made it more difficult for blacksmiths to receive quests. Because there were hardly any quests available, blacksmiths had to work for days to increase their skill proficiency.

In the blacksmith's castle the quests were very basic. But the rewards for those quests were quite decent. By making the appropriate armor and weapons for the quest, fame raised quite quickly. The weapons depended on what the quest referral wanted and may require more skill than available. Even if the result was poor, the blacksmith would still receive a considerable amount of training. This lightened the burden considerably.

“I think, thanks to this castle, the blacksmiths class and other crafters will receive better treatment.”

“Crafters?”

Han Gil’s eyes shone.

This did not happen often.

“Yes. My guess is, with the heightened interest thanks to this new castle, the value of blacksmiths will increase considerably.”

“Then that means...”

All eyes were looking towards the expert.

“The castle lord’s profession will have a large impact on the continent.”

All of the conclusions were converging towards a single point. Otherwise people wouldn’t be able to understand the situation.

Shin Hye Min asked cautiously.

“What kind of changes can we expect to see because of the new blacksmith lord?”

“It’s a little early to make any definite conclusions.”

With that they began beating around the bush with idle conversation. Then he said.

“The first development we should expect to see in that castle is the the level of technology should advance more quickly than other cities. The blacksmiths will sell a larger number of weapons and armor. Moreover, the quality of these items will constantly improve.”

“In other words, this means that this is going to be that castle’s specialty?”

“That seems to be the case. From the information gathered so far, the standard of weapons is currently higher than usual and there are signs of positive effects. Raising soldiers in the castle will be considerably easier than raising mages.”

Shin Hye Min nodded at what the experts said.

With combat based castle lords could raise strong soldiers easily. Wizards lords increased the overall magical power. Yet blacksmiths were able to have a similar impact as a combat related profession.

*

When Weed returned to the Versailles Continent, the sun had

already gone down and it was evening already.

The clear jewel like stars were twinkling in the sky.

Dark clouds loomed overhead of Weed. Harsh thunder bolts rained down from the sky. The entire rest of the Continent was busy watching the televisions.

“Damn! This cursed profession forcefully made me into the Lord.”

His complaining and lamenting over his cursed profession did not disappear.

Rhodium City of Artists.

In reality it was a city infested with beggars.

There was no guarantee that someone would try and overthrow Morata after Weed took over.

Exploiting high taxes!

Ripping off the residents and squeezing out large taxes.

Raising soldiers to fight monsters to earn him items and money!

For Weed being a vicious dictator was truly his dream.

“Honestly, what is peace... there is no need for any of that. Anything beats being a beggar.”

Weed wanted to be a dictator.

But a lot of traders did not come through Morata because it was far from being a metropolis. Famous fortresses did not border it nor were there well developed hunting grounds.

“But being a Lord should come with some benefits right? Regional status window!”

Lord Weed was allowed to use that command.

The Province of MorataA province belonging to the Nifleheim Empire.

In the past the Emperor brought the land prosperity but now it is hard to imagine it.

Military

20

Economy

90

Culture

120

Technology

190

Religion

80

Urban Development

62

Security

98%

There are currently no soldiers so a regiment of vigilantes exists in its place. For one year the province will have the protection of the Church of Freya. There are few buildings. The residents are very poor. Merchants used to visit this land. Needs rapid development to quickly improve the livelihood of the residents. Festivals and sculptures make the residents more happy. Requires more cultural facilities for the residents to put behind their harsh past. Former cloth and sewing industry is on the decline.

The local population believe in the Church of Freya as their religion.

In the future, it is likely that it will become the central faith of the Kingdom.

Specialties:

Leather and Cloth.

Total Territory Population: 7863

Monthly tax income: 2300 gold

Village operating costs and expenditures:

Military 20%

Economic Development 20%

Village Maintenance 45%

Donations to the Church of Freya 15%

The information he got was in itself.

“Its not even at the level of Baran Village in the kingdom of Rosenheim!”

The towns in the southern part of Rosenheim were constantly being attacked by monsters.

Now that he thought about it, the town had been reduced to ruins by the vampires and that halted its development.

Weed quickly regretted it. He usually had a lot of regrets but he could feel this one tingling in his bones.

“I even got the salt that was 200 won more expensive. This must be my punishment.”

Developing the military and the economy would require a large sum of money. It would take hundreds of thousands, no millions, of gold to advance Morata into an enviable city.

Weed did not have the time or money to afford it.

“The position is nothing more than a luxury for a Dark Gamer.”

At this time, seventy six of the lords on the Versailles Continent in the various kingdoms were users. Most of them have and are attending college.

By governing and improving a town you get fame and fortune! However, it was not an easy task.

*

There were various mountains around the town of Morata.

After the ice that had piled up melted, the surface of the rock was exposed.

Weed climbed the mountain while holding Zahab's Carving Knife.

“I have to force my body!”

Extreme physical labor!

No matter if it was day or night, Weed never forgot to make sculptures.

When the sun rose, he had made many sculptures. There were strong tough men with weapons such as swords dancing around. When the moon rose, there were women as well. But Weed did not stop there.

“Moonlight Sculpting!”

The unique sculpting ability to emit light.

The difficulty of sculpting went up when using the skill.

Jjeojeosal!

He worked on the rock to make a slender arm.

It was softer, unlike the other rocks he had used in the past. To keep the feel of the sculpture he had to pay attention to the materials.

Seoyoon.

He had spent several months with her.

It was very difficult to sculpt various people doing different things such as dancing.

A girl dancing on one leg.

Four soldiers brandishing long spears.

It was very easy to break.

It was inevitable since he had yet to master moonlight sculpting.

“I can’t help it if it fails.”

Weed boldly took the loss. But it was worth it.

Shirtless men showing off around the campfire.

Women doing sensual and provocative dances.

The dancing was full of energy!

The Memory of the Night Festival in Morata had been created.

It took over ten days to complete.

- Please set the name of the statue.

Weed had thought in advance and gave it a noble name.

“A Night in Morata.”

Somehow he made a titled piece! He was reminded of a movie he saw when he was a kid. Weed couldn't quite remember the name but he went with it.

- A Night in Morata, correct?

“Yeah.”

Ttiring!

A moonlight sculpting masterpiece! You have completed the piece
A Night in Morata!

A piece that represents people dancing! An astonishing dance full of passion and energy was born. Unfortunately the sculpture was damaged a few times during creation. Incomplete sculpture.

Because of the reputation for being an excellent sculpture, it does not appear to be a mistake.

The sculptor gave this piece endless possibilities.

This piece will be talked of for many years.

No one will forget the creative and artistic skills that the sculptor used.

The name of this sculpture will remain in the history of the Versailles Continent.

Artistic Value:

An excellent work created by the Sculptor Weed. 6300

Options:

The statue A Night in Morata gives

15% increased Health and Mana regeneration during the day.

30% increased Health.

All stats increased by 10.

All chef, dancer, and bard skills are one level higher.

Other statue effects do not overlap.

Number of Moonlight masterpieces so far: 1

-Sculpting skills have improved.

-Handicrafting has increased to advanced level 4. An additional 8% increase to all handtools and it will affect various areas.

-Sculptural Understanding has increased by 1 level.

-Fame has increased by 110.

-Art stats have increased by 5.

-Stamina has increased by 1.

-All stats increase by 2 for create a Moonlight masterpiece.

“Kuehuehuehuehue!”

Weed had a wicked smile.

Advanced handicrafting level 4!

Every time the skill rose, his damage increased by 8% and his crafting products would have better effects.

The sculpting class was amazing because of the ability to learn all crafting skills and access to the handicrafting skill, as well as the amazing two times growth rate for skills.

Royal Road's hope for below average classes.

A skill that displays true physical effort!

Handicrafting!

He recently learnt the truth.

Handicrafting rapidly raised the Sculpting skill. It also widened the number of skills affected by Handicrafting.

It boosted all manner of production skills with more gentle handling, such as picking herbs. It made sewing more elaborate and helped to restore the durability of repaired items. Even mages needed some level of Handicrafting. One could not hope to increase the Handicrafting by focusing on one skill and repeating the same thing over and over.

Therefore, one needed a large variety of skills and training to boost the Handicrafting skill.

In other words, endless physical labor!

The embodiment of physical labor in all skills.

Whenever he got a level in Handicrafting, Weed could not help but smile.

“Handicrafting increased a level. Hehe, I should work hard and make another light sculpture.”

Weed looked to see that there was no one else around. Then he started to dance around vulgarly with the carving knife using Moonlight Sculpting.

“It’s like winning a lottery ticket after getting dealt a bad hand. It doesn’t mean that you can’t have fun.”

Simple and easy! Sometimes he expressed his delight like a crazy man. It was his one act of comfort from having to constantly repeat the same thing over and over.

“204 hours of hard work yet it came out flawed.”

Weed painfully reflected on his work.

He was not sleeping or eating properly and it had affected his work.

“If I worked 6000 hours this month, my goal for next month should be 6001 hours. That is what it means to be truly devoted to hard work.”

If he was given a lot of money, he would sew on doll eyes for 100 years!

The finished work however would have to be successful compared to the effort involved.

Weed put a massive amount of work into his sculptures but a few still ended up as failures.

“There’s still time left.”

Weed went towards the rocks without a break.

He had to go to Todeum but he could afford a little time.

For the next sixty days of the Versailles continent, Weed sculpted from the rocks in the mountains. He managed to make a couple dozen classic pieces, four grand pieces, and one masterpiece.

With that, he managed to reach Advanced Sculpting.

*

A large number of adventurers arrived in the town of Morata.

People used to stay away because of the severe weather, but now it had subsided.

Since the air and weather was refreshing, it was no surprise that

monsters and adventurers started to appear.

“It’s a village!”

“According to the map, this is Morata.”

“Let’s check out the place.”

Villagers looked at the town in amazement.

Most of the northern towns had been devastated. With all the monster attacks, public security was a mess. In most towns, the monster had invaded too far.

They were less than villages and more like hunting grounds.

Monsters would trot around freely, eating and killing humans!

“In case something happens, I will lead the group. I leave healing up to you.”

“Okay. I’ll take care of the treatment.”

The party of five cautiously approached the village.

This party was quite famous in the Versailles Continent.

Behind the party was a total of 300 people.

People sought to explore the northern continent. They thought it would be safe once they entered a town. However it was early in the morning and that was the time that monster activity peaked!

The party raised their vigilance whenever they entered a village.

“Welcome!”

“Welcome to our village.”

The Morata citizens greeted them in unison.

“We sell tough durable clothes in Morata.”

“We also sell armor with high defense and clothes for women.”

The adventurers went around Morata’s specialties shops. They looked around at the trees and the ground. One of them nervously asked.

“What is that over there?”

This was usually not seen in a village.

The reason was soon revealed.

The adventurers saw a bunch of cute boys and girls holding a bunch of pretty sculptures!

“Selling sculptures of flowers, rabbits, deer, as well as high quality pieces! There are also sculptures of monsters from Morata, such as the wolves.”

The residents were trying to make money somehow. They were trying to earn money like how Weed earned chump change in the beginning.

Then they saw a vacant lot where Weed was sitting.

“Gear for sale, traditional antiques from the Nifleheim empire, as well as iron armor and clothes! There is no doubt about the elegance of the antique patterns!”

Weed piled swords and armor next to him.

“Swords! Iron goods from the master blacksmiths of the ancient Nifleheim Empire! Get this chance now before it passes. It’s not going to be here tomorrow!”

The treasures of the Nifleheim Empire. After so many years, the weapons and armor deteriorated and are now sold as antiques.

“Men, show off to women your love with these clothes and this sword. As for women, this dress was worn by the third princess of the past lord of Morata during a ballroom dance where she was proposed to. Imagine it...”

Weed built up on the items with story.

“What is that guy?”

“A merchant?”

“Let’s check it out.”

The adventurers found themselves interested in Morata village.

They were surprised at the unexpectedly good performance of the stockpiled rusty swords and armor.

“What is this.”

“The damage on the rusty longsword is so good. I wonder how great it used to be?”

“That sword!”

“I like the dress.”

People flocked.

It was after they heard and saw the unexpectedly good performance of the items.

“Ajussi, how much is this dress?”

Weed smiled brightly as he answered.

That rotten fake smile!

“3600 gold.”

“Aegyae! I could buy clothes in the central continent for 3200 gold...and besides these clothes are old.”

Some people were reluctant to buy after finding out the price.

The performance was fine but it was overpriced!

The equipment was old so the durability was 20% lower.

Weed picked up the clothes.

“It looks like I did not repair it yet. Repair, polish, ironing!”

Repairing old clothes!

Using his sewing and blacksmith skills he could return them to their original state. Of course it was impossible to do complete repairs. The polishing would also disappear over time. Repairing them gave the treasures of the Niflheim Empire durability equal to common items but there was more. It had been so long since they have been repaired that the increase of durability and the change in the appearance of the items were spectacular.

“Please decrease the price a little more.”

“You know the clothes are too shabby.”

The guests complained while trying to beat him in a price war.

Weed also actively utilized engraving.

There was the sculpture of the beautiful woman that Zahab loved his entire life.

As well as Emperor Geihar Arpen that united the continent.

He was selling food along with the items.

“Original old styles are fashionable these days. I’m in a good mood so I’ll alter anything you want. I’ll carve whatever you want into it.”

This boosted the value of the items. Equipment performance was not the only aspect. No matter the performance, people wanted to look nice as well.

Nicely engraved equipment and sculptures worked to give a slight stat boost.

“Come! Come! Cheap! Cheap! Celebrate coming to Morata with a new set of equipment! It will be hard to find equipment like this anywhere else except here in northern Morata. An opportunity like this passes by in no time!”

Weed’s hands and mouth were moving non-stop as he advertised.

“What do you think?”

“The quality is not that bad. It’s hard to find stuff like this in the stores.”

“It looks comfortable and lightweight.”

Weed sat by quietly wondering how many people were going to buy.

“Customers should think about purchasing now rather than later! There’s limited stock so if you don’t hurry it might all run out!”

When there were limited amounts then price went up.

Weed sold the equipment so well that he sold food of the Nifleheim Empire for the rest of the time.

*

Adventurers in Morata Village!

They were all wearing similarly designed weapons and armor.

Dirty, old, and colorful clothing and armor!

It was questionable whether or not the swords with cracks in them could cut a tree.

Nevertheless the adventurers were satisfied.

“I think that for equipment this good it was reasonably priced.”

“Yea. It’s good even if the durability is a bit low.”

“It just means we have to repair it a little more often.”

Weed wickedly sold low durability equipment after repairing

them to temporarily give them more durability and defense.

Of course it was still less expensive than the plated armor sold in stores.

The adventurers did not have much money left.

“I don’t have any money left on me.”

“Then let’s go hunting.”

“Let’s see if we can get some quests.”

The adventurers split up to talk to the residents.

They didn’t know whether or not it was dangerous outside the city. Therefore they went looking for information about hunting grounds in the surrounding area.

If you raised your friendship level with the residents then you would get better quests and clues about dungeons. Fortunately the villagers were very kind to the adventurers.

“Behind the village is the Lord’s black castle. Sometimes monsters gather near there every year.”

“Did you know? East of the village there is a river made from the

melted ice and snow. Rumor is that if you bathe in it then your charm will increase.”

“Hunting grounds? North, East, South, West; no matter where you go the ancient Nifleheim Empire is infested with monsters! Can you go hunt down the monsters and collect their skin so I can turn it into leather?”

“There’s a famous band of robbers northeast of here in the mountains. They started to become more active. There are going to be wagons coming through there as well. However, there will be other monsters that attack. It would be nice if you could go assist them and clear out the bandit base.”

Quests related to Morata’s specialty of cloth and leather were available too. They would easily exchange materials for money.

Some of the residents said.

“Have you been to the mountains to the east of the village? There are many great sculptures that fill us with pride and confidence.”

“Sculptures?”

“Can you help me? My husband went to see them in the middle of the night. I hear that its dangerous there at that time.”

The adventurers were curious.

“Which residents have we not spoken to yet?”

“Should we go check it out?”

The adventurers went to that place in the rocky mountains that they heard about.

Hundreds of thousands of rocks were piled on the mountain.

Surprisingly many of the rocks were crafted.

Rock sculptures. Nothing comparable to something like a mountain, but there was quite a lot of them.

A sculpture of the villagers entertaining themselves in a festival!

Many of the sculptures symbolized the paladins of the Versailles Continent's Church of Freya.

The sculptures were gradually built up along the mountain on each level.

It all led to the pinnacle of the sculptures.

You have seen Morata's symbol. A tower built for the well-being and development of the town! An excellent and skillful sculptor

crafted this with all his heart, greatly increasing its artistic value.

Health and mana increased by 10%.

3% increase in the town's productivity.

Monsters are less aggressive in the area around the sculpture.

Morata's warriors has been seen.Strong health and tenacity!The appearance of the warriors of the Versailles Continent is enough to fill you with courage to fight the monsters.

Stamina and Strength increased by 3%.

Monster's Fighting Spirit does not apply.

Increases the chance of gaining Fame when you defeat a strong monster.

The effects of various sculptures!

The sculptures on top of the mountain would be considerably helpful for hunting.

The adventurers gaped in surprise.

“Why are there so many sculptures here?”

“Who do you think made all these sculptures?”

Questions began to pop up.

Buildings and other works gradually age with time.

In other words, it was not possible for these to be remnants of the ancient Niflheim Empire.

These sculptures were still fresh!

The sculptor that made these had created them recently.

“Weed! It was Weed!”

“Sculptor Weed?”

“That’s right. Who else but Weed would do such hard work?”

Weed was the most famous sculptor that was named in the rumors. He was known for the hard work in creating the pyramid in Rosenheim Kingdom.

Among the adventurers, many of them had heard of Weed.

“Perhaps it was the guy that sold us the items.”

“After making sculptures in Rosenheim, now he’s here.”

“Since he disappeared for six months, do you think he was making sculptures here?”

“I think he was a part of the expedition.”

“I see. Did you see his sword and armor?”

“They’re exactly the same.”

It was rumored that Weed had blacksmithing and tailoring skills during the expedition.

“He raised blacksmithing and tailoring...”

“Both of them are very difficult to do...”

“It’s like he’s the true god of hard work.”

Not many people had that kind of tenacity.

They still had a few doubts though.

“But Morata Village is where Jeoshin Weed fought against the True Blood Vampires. I’m certain that was his quest.”

“Yea.”

“Then why is Sculptor Weed here? Is it just coincidence?”

“What are you trying to say?”

“Maybe they just have the same name or...”

The rest of the people laughed at those that were seriously considering it.

“To think that Jeoshin Weed and Sculptor Weed are the same is ridiculous. Want to find him to see for yourself?”

“Think about it. There are a lot of people named Weed.”

“A sculptor wouldn’t learn blacksmithing and tailoring, right?”

“Well, they would be too busy to learn other crafting skills...”

“Also remember a little back. During the Necromancer quest with the Legion of the Undead, they briefly showed the armor that Weed was wearing.”

People did not know that the blacksmith skill lifted the restrictions on wearing items as the skill rank increased. That was because there were few intermediate level blacksmiths.

A fierce debate broke out over the topic.

“After the defeat of the True Blood Vampires, Weed, at that time, was of the Paladin profession. But Jeoshin Weed received a special Necromancer quest and he was the Orc Karichi. So they can’t be the same.”

“There’s no proof that Jeoshin Weed stayed in the village. He wouldn’t just sit around all day and craft stuff.”

“Hm, you have a point.”

“Yea, you’re right. There is no way that they could be the same person.”

Everyone had their suspicions and were saying something different.

Never forget the value of a single won!

Because of Weed’s telephone interview with CTS broadcasting, many people were not sure whether or not it was him.

“The Jeoshin Weed!”

“He made a major contribution towards the quest to get rid of the heat on the continent.”

“The expedition suffered through much difficulty but thanks to Weed it succeeded.”

“The continent’s savior...there’s no way he can be. Never!”

“I bet he’s in some unknown dungeon doing a quest or killing a monster that no one was able to before.”

“He’s like a hermit, always in places where people will never, ever find him.”

“Yea. That’s right.”

That was what the general conversation was becoming.

His supporters would never dare to imagine that Weed was a money mongerer.

It’s as believable as a pretty female celebrity saying that she’s going to the restroom!

Still, the adventurers had yet to see the most important sculpture.

You have seen the Tower of Light!A great masterpiece made by a skilled sculptor!Sometimes a sculptor leaves behind a work so great that it stuns the continent.

The tower takes on a grander appearance at night and its full characteristics are displayed.

- Health, Mana and Stamina regeneration increased by 25% for the entire day.

- All stats are increased by 15.

- Maximum Health and Mana increased by 15%.

- Movement speed has increased by 20%.

- Luck increased by 100.

- Increases the power of Holy and Elemental Magic.

Statue weakens the nearby forces of darkness, strong monsters will weaken.

When the sun goes down, then a light show will occur.

The Tower of Light sculpture increases defense to 1.5 times the original value.

When the people saw it they did not leave to hunt. They sat down and waited for the sun to set.

“What is this light show?”

“Light sculptures? Are there such things?”

“Either way, the monsters are 50% stronger at night so there’s no point in leaving.”

They sat around relaxing and chatting.

Then night fell.

A pitch dark night.

There were clouds in the sky so they could not see the moon. Nevertheless, the tower radiated warmth and light.

It was as if it was bright jewel, a beacon of light.

“Pretty.”

“It’s like we’re in a dream...”

“I did not know that it would be this good.”

Most people did not like the idea of sculpting.

“The rating is quite high so I suppose it’s decent.”

“I guess it’s a fairly famous sculpture. It’s quite hard to say if its good.”

For those without prior knowledge of art, it was difficult to feel the inspiration.

Even if it was a world famous sculptor, some people can’t be impressed by what it’s supposed to mean or realize why it is special.

However there were people that could appreciate the Tower of Light.

‘Such a profound work of art.’

‘Oh, such an amazing work of art. But how does one learn to make such a thing...’

‘What a sculpture. I saw the other ones nearby but this is a first...it wouldn’t be bad to go to a sculpture exhibit on a date once in awhile.’

‘But why is it so different compared to the others along the path?’

The Tower of Light.

It was solemn and somber; in the cool, pale moonlight there were 7 brilliant hues of clear and transparent light.

Suddenly the clouds over Morata parted. The moonlight poured onto the surface of the tower and scattered. Everywhere around the tower was bathed in the moonlight.

“Oh!”

Sounds of amazement came out of the viewers' mouths. The tower concentrated light in the center of the tower and dispersed it through the small towers in a mixture of light.

The concentration of light!

Light reflected from the small towers to the central tower.

Reflection of light!

The small towers scattered the light at various angles.

It changed and distorted.

Many rays of light could be seen in the sky.

It spread increasingly as the tower generated light.

Soon it covered the entire mountain!

Therefore they were exposed to the sheen of the light sculptures.

The light danced.

Every time the clouds or the moon moved, the light would dance.

A dance of light that could not be expressed with words.

It was a fantastic sight.

Usually sculpting showed a shape directly. However light sculpting was different as it was not the sculpture being displayed but the light itself.

A piece of art that can be seen but not felt!

The people did not think about leaving that spot.

*

A great sculptor made the Tower of Light!

“Morata has a lot of amazing sculptures.”

“The Tower of Light has such a beautiful light display! Anyone that sees it can’t help but be fascinated.”

“The light was spectacular.”

“It was the most wonderful scene I’ve seen by far.”

“If you’re going to a hard dungeon then you will regret not coming to see the tower.”

It did not take a long time for rumor to spread throughout the Versailles continent.

It improved and made his name more well known. Weed worked for the people in the past and had a reputation in sculpting.

The people that were impressed told their friends.

A video was put on the Royal Road website about the Tower of Light so users could watch and talk about it.

The users began to appreciate the production classes.

“Weed is a true sculptor.”

“His sculptures are popping up all over the place. It must be his human desire to constantly have inspiration.”

“I heard that he has a touch with sculpting beautiful woman.”

“He created such an astounding piece of art.

Bards eventually sang praises of Weed.

Sculptor Weed,

He has a tough job but he broke the confines of poverty.

Soul of sculptures.

The sculpture that rules the light.

Oh, it's so beautiful.

He leaves behind everything he makes.

Like a fairy elf singing and dancing in place.

The legend of gathering the light.

Other people were thrilled when they saw the Tower of Light.

But the people that know Weed found it hard to believe.

“How is it that Oppa has such a delicate sense of beauty...”

Yurin was suspicious so she asked Hwaryeong.

“He’s very good with his hands right?”

“Yes. I like to eat the apples he peels.”

“I wonder how he made that.”

Pale fell into anguish.

‘Maybe we were wrong about Weed all this time?’

They wanted to see him. Artists are often misunderstood for their sense of aesthetics.

‘Weed! I really love the sculpture you made. You’re right. Without enthusiasm and affection for the sculpture there is no way you can make such a beautiful piece.’

Irene apologized to him tearfully.

‘I though Weed kept talking about how he dislikes his profession... I think in the future the complaints are only going to increase.’

Zephyr grinned.

‘Weed is someone that’s really hard to be proud of. This might be something of an accomplishment for making something like this, right?’

Hwaryeong was mistaken about Weed’s mindset.

‘The creation of a new innovative piece of art requires painstaking effort and passion. Along with a wealth of emotions and affection. Weed really is someone that can warm your heart.’

*

When Weed was making the tower he had no idea what to do and was going to make a normal tower.

Moonlight sculpting!

It boasted a high level of sculpting difficulty.

The sculpture itself emits light so it was hard to think of an idea.

“Damn it. There is no end to sculpting’s curses.”

Weed was annoyed with his harness.

He was able to use moonlight sculpting to make small sculptures, to some extent, by outline the shape. But for such a large object, he had to think of one or two things else.

“This damnable sculpting!”

Weed dealt his frustration of hanging on the peak by slashing the rock.

He was dangling high above the ground with the sculpture.

As he was smashing the snow with moonlight sculpting, tears trickled down his face.

So far to note, in the sunlight the effects of light sculpting was greatly diminished. Then night came.

Morata village had a full moon.

The moon shone on the sculptures crookedly. The mirror like surfaces of the rocks reflected the moonlight.

“The light is reflecting off the sculptures and onto the snow!”

Weed was irritated as he clung onto the mountain. He spent hours trying to position the moonlight correctly. Gradually he just slashed to cut the sculpture at more angles.

Chapter 9: Gathering

In the past, the other villages around Morata were devastated from waves of monsters. In the streets piled up with snow, around the buildings with patched up ceilings, many people were gathering around. The thing that captivated everyone's attention was the glorious statue!

“So Morata is somewhere around here.”

“That's the place with the Tower of Light!”

“People can't come to the Northern area without hearing about it at least once.”

“I like how there's a lot of good monsters to hunt too.”

The number of tourists visiting Morata increased exponentially each day.

“Looking to hunt over at the hills!”

“Going to rescue the fire wizards from the insects in the cave.”

“The name of the quest is ‘Lisa's Handkerchief’. You can get a high quality handkerchief as the reward for finishing it.”

“Buying food! Is there anyone selling food that lasts longer than a week?”

The vacant lot in the center of Morata village was in an uproar.

Ever since the ice melted in the North, hundreds of thousands of travelers from the central continent moved over. Some of them came to Morata.

Morata was one of the most important geographically positioned paths to the rest of the Northern Continent.

Still, no one expected that such a large crowd of travelers would come.

Moreover, they did not expect to be able to use the town as a base when they were hunting.

The Tower of Light had changed everything.

Wonderful sculptures!

Women were the first people to come and see the beautiful Tower of Light.

“So pretty!”

“I almost feel like I would have regretted it if I didn’t come here.”

They had seen the video, but standing directly on top of the rocky mountain in front of the light choreography was an experience of a lifetime that one would never forget.

It was impressive to see it shining in the moonlight until the sun rose over the plains.

“So this is the sculpture.”

“Even if the class’s attack power is quite low, it’s amazing they can make something like this.”

“I know. There are a number of pieces like this on the Versailles continent.”

Over time the popularity of sculptors grew.

Most of the tourists that came to the rocky mountain was due to the Tower of Light.

There were still a lot of female users, but there were a lot of males as well.

There were couples everywhere!

These men were forced to visit by the women, but there were some classes that visited for more practical reasons.

The life-or-death hunting.

However, less than 10% of the entire Versailles continent actually hunted to this extent.

“Health, Mana and Stamina regeneration are all increased so we can hunt monsters without taking as many breaks.”

“It’s thanks to the Tower of Light that the hunting time has sped up so much.”

“Increased elemental? Have you seen the Tower of Light?”

“Looking for a cleric that has visited the Tower of Light last night!”

The dance of lights.

The effects of the statue eased and hastened hunting.

They wanted to hunt but didn’t want to leave the proximity of Morata Village.

The statue was the symbol of Morata Village!

Because of the advantages of the sculpture they were forced to stay around the village.

The church of Freya was also affected.

The priests and paladins were readily available if one wanted to receive blessings or dispels.

Morata was the only village at the center of the Northern Continent with a church.

As the number of tourists steadily increased, the effects of the statue will continue to develop the amount of quests and hunting grounds.

Weed could not watch over it for long.

Time was approaching for him to go to the Vampire Kingdom of Todeum.

“Call Vampire Lord Tori!”

“You have called me.”

Tori was dressed in black clothing as well as a black cloak.

A handsome pale face!

He was tall and overflowing with grace.

Weed looked over him with his eyes.

“It seems that you have grown since you no longer call me master.”

“Well I mean, in four more days, I’ll be free.”

Vampire Kingdom Todeum!

Only three days left until it was time to go there.

Weed did not forget to remind Tori about the last three years he had him for.

“The last three days can feel longer than the last three years. In the course of the last three days, it wouldn’t harm you to say it.”

“ ... ”

“Hey, tell me more about Todeum.”

Weed wanted to gather more detailed information about Todeum.

“Todeum is our Holy Land. Every three months we get together and celebrate.”

“Celebrate?”

“Yes. The nobility of the night get together and celebrate our eternal lives with blood.”

“What else?”

“Compared to the crude and childish technology of human civilization, the nobility of the night have cities boasting a long history.”

Tori had a tremendous amount of pride and self-esteem for Todeum.

Weed judged.

‘Vampire Lord Tori grew up there so he’s probably embellishing it a bit.’

If it takes a considerable amount of effort to go somewhere then you can expect to be something special there.

It was true for the prestigious kingdom of the dwarves and the kingdom of the elves.

In the kingdom of the dwarves, the bellows and the hammering never ceased.

Elves were aligned with nature so they planted lots of trees and flowers.

Vampires were the nobles of the night so you could seem to expect luxurious and fashionable lifestyles.

‘In addition, this is an exclusive opportunity to get quests and hunting grounds that nobody else have been to before.’

According to Vampire Lord Tori, Todeum was a place that humans haven't been to in the past and will not be able to go to in the future.

So it was only available for Weed!

The number of quests in Morata increased but there were too many tourists. Even for a simple quest, there was a lot of competition.

It was hard to have a monopoly on a hunting ground. It'll be easier to find people to party and go hunt monsters.

Even though it was worth it to hunt in Morata, it did not even cross Weed's mind. He could not ignore the doubled experience

and benefits of hunting for one week.

Weed wanted more information.

“You can only take a few people, can’t you?”

“It depends on the situation.”

“Situation?”

“Yes. I recall that I have a total of 200,000 bats to take with me to Todeum. It takes about 200 to take a human so I can only take 1000. But if you’re bringing stuff with you then we would have to reduce the number of humans.”

“Is there any limit to the number of people that can go to Todeum?”

“As long as the human being is prepared for death.”

“And what if you die?”

“Anyone that dies in the kingdom of the night is banished to the world of men.”

That meant that there was a significant penalty of dying once since they would not be allowed to respawn in the nearest city but

rather expelled from the kingdom.

‘This is going to be very dangerous.’

Weed frowned.

It was not uncommon for people to die in the middle of a quest or hunting. This is because there are others that have already experienced it the first time.

In other words, that was the risk of hunting somewhere this rare since he could die since he didn't know about the hunting grounds or quests.

Nervous because of not knowing what there was to come!

The situation was unpredictable.

To make matters worse, he couldn't take along the Wyverns or Geumini. They wouldn't be able to come back since, when they died, they had no way of reviving.

‘Safety first. It would be crazy to hunt without gathering information. Doing it alone will be difficult. I need to get my most trusted companions.’

Weed sent Pale and three others a whisper.

- Would you like to take the risk of going to Todeum with me?

*

After Pale received Weed's whisper, he asked the others for their opinion.

"The Kingdom of Vampires Todeum. It's still an undisclosed location so we don't know how dangerous it is. Weed is trying to find people to go with him and I'm going with him, so what does everyone want to do?"

Currently Pale has the position of leader and this adventure had a significantly high probability of death so he had to see what his companions thought.

Considering what he had said, Maylon answered.

"I want to go."

Since they were lovers it was no surprise that she was going with him. In addition, whenever Weed went on an adventure there were opportunities to be had.

'This time we're fighting under pretty high stakes.'

Maylon had gone hunting with Weed a few times, but she had never truly gone on an adventure or quest with him.

Surka nervously asked Romuna.

"Unnie, are you going?"

"Yes, of course. Won't the vampire kingdom be very beautiful? It seems to be worth it. Come on, what do you say?"

"I wanna go with you. It's my duty as a priest to go along."

Romuna and Surka were vampire fanatics.

When they were young, they were mesmerized by vampire movies.

Pointed fangs!

Black cloaks!

The girls were even fond of the little bloodsucking vampire bats.

Now only Yurin, Hwaryeong, and Zephyr were the only three left to make a decision, as well as Seechwi.

Of course, Zephyr was going along loyally.

“I’m going. Hwaryeong, what are you going to do?”

She already made her decision to go along the very moment Pale mentioned Weed. She wanted to go with him for the Northern Expedition but unfortunately he had refused.

“I’ll be there.”

Now the party turned their attention towards Yurin and Seechwi.

In this case, it would be very dangerous for Yurin since she was very weak.

“I’ll go.”

Yurin wanted to go to Todeum with Weed.

“Chwiik, I’m going too.”

Seechwi decided to go.

It was an Orc’s nature to fight, even if the damage was insignificant.

For a monster, it seemed appropriate to go to dangerous places!

‘But...this time I’m going to get to kill something for sure.’

Seechwi had sorrowfully been a member of their party a few times. Pale’s party was mainly comprised of young people so she seemed to be an old maid.

The generation gap!

Irene and Surka treated the elderly warmly so that made the sorrow even worse.

‘I don’t have a choice as long as Seoyoon is still like that.’

Not too long ago, Seoyoon had finally managed to say something again but since then she had not said anything else. She wasn’t suddenly going to get better, so to get her normal again it would take time for her to regain her words. So in order to recover Seoyoon, Weed’s presence may be an important role. So for her sake, she must go. It was an important reason to stay near Weed.

Mapan was a shameless trader preying on the Orcs!

Mapan always told others.

“Weed is like a teacher to me.”

Obscure means of making money from customers.

Acting like a nice guy to rip people off.

It was essential to use flattery to sell stuff.

An insatiable greed for money!

He had learned the fundamentals of trade from Weed. He even looked in the mirror and practiced until he had a rotten smile.

Mapan was going to participate in the adventure to the vampire kingdom.

It was a huge gain for merchants to go to a new area. It was a great opportunity to exclusively get money, skill and fame from selling. For the Vampire Kingdom Todeum where no one was able to go to, it was something a trader could not pass up.

“This adventure can be an opportunity.”

Mapan did not forget.

Weed had led the Orcs and the Dark Elves against the monsters in the Yuroki Mountains.

Weed had invested tens of thousands of gold in order to affect the battle.

Mapan could not help but feel nervous.

There were benefits to be had in an unfavorable combat situation.

The Lich Shire and the Immortal Legion!

His heart jumped every time as the large number of enemies dwindled.

There was so much tension, excitement and thrills and then it was over.

Mapan wanted to go on such an adventure again.

Geomchi, Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5.

Instead of hunting in a party like Pale, they were deep in the Yuroki Mountains with their swords.

Every day, from morning until evening, they would wield their swords.

“We have dedicated our lives to the sword. Aside from the sword, I want the opportunity to meet with women.”

A sense of urgency was contained in Geomchi2's sword.

The sword was his way of life.

He did not regret it.

If he could, he would walk down the path of the sword once more. It was not about making the body stronger but the mindset of it.

Geomchi had said.

“A man’s home is in the hilt of a sword. Even if the years pass by and one becomes old, the sword will remain young.”

Do not throw away the sword.

Through the sword, you will meet a girl.

But only if you are strong!

The teachers wield their swords their entire lives as single men.

Martial Artist!

It was a job that could use any weapon.

It did not matter if the durability of the sword was going to break from hunting.

Just pick up a weapon and attack the monster.

They ate as if they were starving.

“The mind is clouded when one is hungry.”

That was the mindset of Geomchi, Geomchi² and Geomchi³.

In reality, they had no problem fasting for three days.

‘I’ll get the ladies by being overwhelmingly fast and powerful.’

‘Famous rare items! You have to get the attention of the ladies.’

‘I want to protect. I want to be taken care of. I want a woman!’

Their thoughts were filled with selfishness as they wield their swords.

It didn’t matter if they were sweating profusely as if it were raining, they did not even think of quitting.

They were completely immersed.

They swung their swords 100,000 times a day.

They wielded their swords even when they were not hunting.

Strength depended on Skill and Stamina, so they only took breaks when they were exhausted.

It took time to move to another hunting ground, and it took considerably more time to find party members.

Even if they got into parties with others, the hunt did not last very long.

But for the Geomchis it was more of a hassle.

Fighting by themselves!

They swung their swords 100,000 times a day.

They did not need any rationalizing.

Once they set a goal, all they did was train.

They did not bother with complex calculations.

It was enough to shed sweat until breathing became difficult.

Such was the only life they knew.

Geomchi² swallowed his saliva from hunger.

“The right woman for me. I don’t need much. Barley bread and corn today, rye bread tommorow. Any woman would be fine for me.”

Geomchi⁵ was even lower.

“Kimchi three times a day, Shin Ramen, if you boil in hot water then it’s fine.”

Their standards were getting lower.

“I would be fine even with just eggs.”

Geomchi² would not be moved and pressed on.

“Keuheu! The eggs do not need to be made do they?”

“How can I meet a woman without this level of devotion? For love one must make sacrifices.”

Geomchi² had asked.

And then there was Geomchi5.

“Sahyung, I think I would be able to give up meat.”

“Meat!”

The sahyungs admired each other’s determination.

Then almost at the same time their skills rose.

Ttiring!

- Weapon mastery has reached Advanced Level 6.

The base damage of all weapons increased to 360%.

There is a 3% increase in attack speed. Mana costs for skills decreased by 4%.

Advanced level 6!

As a martial artist they could learn all weapons instead of just swords.

The weapon skill was becoming closer and closer to the master level.

“If we keep this up, then we will soon reach our goal!”

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4, and Geomchi5 replied back in a shout.

“Yes!”

Increasing the Weapon skill was far from tolerable. Normally people would get sick and tired of swinging a sword all day. Nevertheless, they steadily remained devoted.

On top of the cliff, they continued their monotonous lifestyle.

Geomchi put his sword into the ground.

“Men!”

“Yes Master!”

“Come over here.”

Geomchi2, Geomchi3, Geomchi4 and Geomchi5 quickly gathered around.

“Tell us what it is Master!”

“Look at how long we had stayed here.”

Others would be appalled to know that they had stayed up there for the past few months.

“Every now and again don’t you suppose we should quench our burning desires by going off into the world?”

Geomchi asked his disciples for their opinions.

“Yes, I think that sometimes.”

Geomchi5 opened his mouth to laugh and grin.

The moment separating decisions and actions.

In the past they were thought to have unbelievable combat skills. It was scary to think how much they have improved since then.

Now the Geomchis could enjoy the fight.

Geomchi5 blindly followed the Master’s words.

“Master, that is a very good idea. Do you have a place in mind?”

“We do not know much about the Versailles Continent. Don’t you want to go to a place that no one else is able to go to?”

“That would be nice.”

“This time we are going to go along with Weed.”

“So this place is the one with the vampires.”

“Let’s get all of the kids together!”

The Geomchis had separated once to seek individual training.

Now it was time for them to reunite.

Geomchis gather!

The Geomchis that had spread to the far corners of the continent to seek the way of the warrior gathered back together.

They had a wide range of purposes. Some went to find strong swords, others drifted, and few went on quests. Most of them went around trying to find strong people to challenge.

They moderately raised their levels by hunting.

Some even gathered to help the devastated town of Morata.

“My sword skills have reached Advanced Level 3 so I’m a lot stronger now.”

“By doing quests I managed to get 10200 fame.”

“I went to the Northern area and fought along with Bingryong.”

The practitioners were proud of their accomplishments and assembled individually.

They learned to never give up and all manner of tricks to fighting.

Geomchi⁵ saw in the eyes of the five hundred trainees the spirit of a warrior.

Earlier he had be quietly laughing.

Now he had somewhat of a sneaky smile.

“Youngest one, where were you and what did you do?”

“Kuhuhuhu! You don’t need to know how much pain I was in. But if you need to know, I will tell you.”

“Tell me what has happened to you.”

“Well, Sahyung, the continent has been really hot lately right?”

“I know.”

The practitioners nodded.

Stamina consumption became worse and they began to sweat profusely as it got warmer. Many gathered at the center of the continent because of the surplus of monsters and quests. Others rested after they hunted.

They would not have withstood the heat if it wasn't for the mentality of the practitioners.

The five hundred Geomchis laughed insidiously.

“The continent was hot so I immediately went to the Selrun River.”

“River?”

“What was there?”

“What sort of monsters attacked you?”

The practitioners were curious.

They had listened to Geomchi2 about the way of the sword.

Their fighting instincts were stimulated many fold while fighting strong monsters.

But he shook his head to show it was not as ridiculous as the five hundred Geomchis were thinking.

“I mean, I didn’t get to see any monsters at all. Selrun River is famous for being pure and transparent. The river flows very quickly so it’s very suitable for swimming.”

“Swimming? You went to the Selrun River to swim?”

“Well, lots of women were there because of the heat wave. Tens of thousands of girls in bikinis.”

“Gulp.”

“Tens, tens of thousands!”

The five hundred practitioners had eyes as if they were sparkling.

“Explain to me in detail what happened and why the hell you were there!”

“Well because of the heat, women were enjoying themselves by

splashing around in the river and sprawled over the sand. In the clear and transparent river she was wearing a bikini...hehe I went there with a girl that I'm seeing."

"So, so envious!"

The instructors and practitioners admitted it.

It seemed much more rewarding than the five hundred and five of them training their swords as warriors!

*

Lee Hyun visited the item trading site on a daily basis.

"The High Elf Bow. It's sale price is gradually increasing."

As demand increases and supply is short then prices increase.

Lee Hyun took a look at the item trading site and then went to the proud Dark Gamers Union.

On the Dark Gamer's site you could see a mountain of information based on your rank.

You didn't have to say anything that you didn't want to disclose to the public.

It was natural for people to monopolize information.

Needless to say, information was valuable to the Dark Gamers.

The Dark Gamers had access to information that the public generally did not know about.

Lee Hyun's rank was "C".

The grade was set at the initial sign-up.

He could not see the hidden information for the important quests and hunting grounds.

Nevertheless, there was still quite a bit of information that could be obtained through the Union.

In general, the information found publicly on the internet was very lacking.

Here it was possible to view information on kingdoms and castles, characteristics of a city, and evaluations of hunting grounds and analysis on materials.

It was a considerable difference from low level articles.

“Sooner or later I have to upload some information to increase my rank.”

Second law of the Dark Gamers.

Give as much as you receive!

In the meantime, for the sake of rewards, Lee Hyun uploaded some information about the North.

Dark Gamers enjoyed hunting and receiving requests to go on adventures.

It was extremely rare to find hunting grounds that weren't owned by guilds and that you had to pay a fee for.

It was difficult to make money when they constantly had to pay off the guilds.

It was better to go down the more difficult path.

He calculated the amount of information he had from Morata to as far as the Valley of Death, so the information about the wolves would be useful for the Dark Gamers.

Then Lee Hyun checked the commissions on the Dark Gamer's Union.

There was a number of commissions from purchasing goods, escorting goods, and commissions for the Dark Gamer's Union to participate in wars.

You could purchase a commission based on rank.

- Red Rank. Number of purchases 12. Metson's crafted emeralds. They are required for a quest. Looking to receive them within 3 days.

- Blue Rank. Number of purchases 7. We are the Elementals Guild and we are looking for people to save the Elemental Spring.

- Blue Rank. Number of purchases 2. Looking for people to kill a certain person. Message me if you are willing.

Murder was an occasional commission. For Dark Gamers, it did not matter about personal feelings or fairness but simply as a lucrative source of income.

Of course these commission are not always accepted unconditionally. It was harder to make money in Royal Road due to the various constraints of a killer.

So people did not usually take killing commissions unless they are in the need of money.

The killing commissions were the most eye catching ones on the board.

- Diamond Rank. Number of purchases 183.

Obtain the Paskran's Lance. Do not ask why...

I beg you to help me. We can negotiate price after.

Paskran's Lance!

Even the name of the item was unknown. There were rumors about the person disclosing the information. Just from the name they could tell that it was a unique item. With things like these, there is only one in existence.

“It looks like a quest. Probably he needs to find Paskran's Lance for the quest.”

Unique items.

A commission from a diamond rank user usually had a minimum pay of a million won. Given the rank of the user, it could very possibly be millions of won.

Lee Hyun kept the information about Paskran's Lance in his head.

Those in the Dark Gamers Union tried to remember the items that were being bought. That way if they are hunting it, then they would remember that they needed to collect 300 red hearts. That

way they could collect enough for the commission.

It was an essential measure to earn money.

A lot of Dark Gamer's commissions don't get the attention of the hundred of thousands of gamers. But this one commission caught Lee Hyun's eyes.

Diamond Rank commission!

The number of requests for it did not even reach 0.1%.

- Diamond Rank. Number of purchases 289.

We are a party of six. Average level 360.

Looking to spend two weeks on a vacation throughout the Versailles Continent.

Either quests, vacation, or an adventure.

Five million won.

“Five million won.”

Lee Hyun's mouth took on a look of ridicule.

Given the number of purchases and the level of the user, it was possible to guess the nature of the person posting.

“These guys think they can do anything with money!”

Lee Hyun looked at the monitor while cursing for a while.

Then he moved his mouse to send a mail.

Hello.

I have contacted you from the Dark Gamer's Union.

Are you currently available?

It is not a problem if you are not available... but reply back if you are interested.

I would like to invite to visit a city in a new kingdom, of the Immortal Vampires.

Please come. Thank you!

Bow.

Chapter 10: Todeum

This was the day that Vampire Lord Tori had announced!

Early in the morning at Morata village, the Geomchis, Pale, Irene, Seechwi, Mapan and their other companions were there waiting.

“So this is Morata Village!”

Mapan had eventually become a mid-level merchant. Because of his skill level, he was now able to trade in precious metals and gems.

A small blessing given to merchants. A very luxurious wagon. It was a large wagon that was drawn by 8 horses and was capable of carrying a lot of cargo and groceries loaded within would not spoil as quickly.

“Buying food! Buying battle supplies!”

Mapan bought supplies that he thought they would need for Todeum.

He went around Morata Village, buying and stockpiling supplies in his wagon from the residents and adventurers.

In the meantime, Weed was at the village entrance earning himself some quick money.

“Wonderful carved sculptures for sale! Each are one of a kind and give stat benefits!”

Sculptures carved by the great Sculptor Weed!

Almost all the tourists that visited Morata wanted to get a souvenir. There was a long line of people in from of Weed to buy sculptures.

A small girl said.

“Ajussi, I’ll take the sculpture that looks like the tower of light.”

Weed said, smiling cheerfully.

“It’ll be 10 gold.”

“Ehh, it’s so expensive: I can’t buy it.”

"..."

The small girl left since it was a rip-off.

The next customer, an old grandmother with gray hair, walked

forwards.

“Well young man. I would like the sculpture carved like the Tower of Light near the rocky mountains.

"Yes. That will be 9 gold."

Weed gave a her a small discount.

He had a weak spot for the elderly!

"What?"

“8 gold...”

“What sculpture is this expensive? You’re not disregard this elderly lady, are you?”

“No, that’s not it...then how about 5 gold.”

“Elders don’t have that kind of money. How about 2 silver!”

“That’s hardly the price anymore...sigh okay ma’am.”

"You should have done so earlier."

Tears fell from Weeds eyes as he watched his sculpture disappear.

His innate skill of flattery!

The prices of his sculptures were right to some extent.

‘Damn. It’s so hard to make money with sculptures.’

The money he got from selling the weapons and armor he made through the blacksmith skill was more than he was expecting.

But here buying sculpture is considered a luxury most people can’t afford.

It is rare for people to buy sculptures as gifts because the prices for sculptures keep rising due to rarity.

The next customers were slightly older Ahjummas.

The Ahjummas hurled sharp questions at him.

“If I order one sculpture, can a get a discount on another?”

“That’s...”

“You created it from a piece of wood that can be found on the side of the road. Isn’t the cost too much just for this level of

service?”

The customers thought sculptures were like things that were mass produced and could buy one get one free like in supermarkets!

Sculptures were still recognized as a souvenir.

This was a situation Weed could not get out of.

No matter how much a great sculptor is praised, realistically he still doesn't earn any money.

‘Sculptor is a horrible profession!’

Weed was forced to concede earning him a little less. Thanks to his fame, he was fortunate enough to earn, on average, 5 gold a sculpture. Yurin was drawing paintings nearby.

“Get in line!”

There were even people flocking near Yurin, comparable to that of Weed. However, the big difference was that they were all men!

“What would you like me to draw?”

“Relax...just write down your contact information for me,

please.”

“That’s difficult. I’ll just draw you something cool.”

“Thank you.”

There were a few customers that came multiple times.

“This is already the third time Mister Customer.”

“Just call me Hans.”

“Then, Hans. What kind of drawing would you like?”

“I would like a picture that Yurin has drawn with her heart. If you want, Yurin, you can leave the canvas blank.”

“Oh thank you. As a painter, I only have a little bit of money...”

“I know. Are you having trouble? I can give you 7 gold of my money.”

These customers gave her items.

“I thought you might need some leather gloves...”

“I think it would be a good time for you to get a new hat.”

Men flocked with much liveliness to see his little sister, the beautiful Yurin!

She was far more popular than Weed's sculptures.

Weed had to make huge sculptures or sculptures using expensive materials to get good effects. That was what it took in order to make a sculpture with tremendous effects.

Sculptures contributed to the development of cities and kingdoms! However because sculptures, are by nature, hard to transport due to its weight was the reason that people did not buy such sculptures.

Fine sculptures don't even sale for much, unless they are at the level of Grand or Magnum pieces.

Pure passion, and the ambition to create great pieces of art!

So a true artist will immediately choose the sculpting job skill.

Weed fell to the ground in regret.

‘Since this wass how it is, it would have been better if I had been a painter.’

To immerse himself in his work and the joy of getting his blood boiling towards a finished product brought him a sense of accomplishment! But then again, it couldn't be compared to the feeling of one licking their fingers to finger through a stack of stiff million won notes.

He was thoroughly a sculptor that thought about money!

Rather than trying to sell heavy sculptures, it seemed that it would be better and easier to sell food to the people buying paintings.

Finally all the food supplies had been gathered.

Mapan approached and said.

“Weed-nim, it is ready.”

“What about Master and the Geomchis?”

“They are waiting in a vacant lot in the center of the town.”

"Then shall we go now?"

Weed folded up the stand he had set up.

“For today for all those waiting for the next sculpture we will

give a discount.”

“Eh, we’ve been waiting for nothing. For about 20 minute that is.”

“I really wanted one”.

People who were waiting in line to receive a sculpture were given apologies before their face of yearning dissipate in disappointment.

“Than Mapan-nim, please wait here for a bit.”

“Yes? Yes. Goodbye.”

After requesting Mapan to wait, Weed then went to the barn, where he took out Talrock’s armor.

His new piece of armor made out of mithril that shines.

When Weed equipped the armor, the armor gave him a decent amount of stat bonuses.

Wearing nothing but black, black armor, black cape, looking like a black knight!

Thanks to his intermediate blacksmith skills, he could equip other job class’s armor, despite him being a sculptor.

Weed came out of the barn, fully equipped in the armor to emerge onto Morata's street.

*

"You're kidding."

"I don't think so."

"Then what?"

"There's no way."

Weed was being a bit excessive.

High level warrior.

He was wearing armor that was made out of mithril.

"Armor like that has high level restrictions."

"He must be high leveled."

The way other people saw Weed changed.

He had spent a few days on the side of the road with a carving knife and a piece of wood or stone and now he was the center of attention and envy.

He walked past the pedestrians and over to where Mapan was waiting.

"Did you wait? Let's go then."

"Yes? Yes!"

Mapan walked with him to where Yurin was waiting.

'There's gotta be a deeper meaning to what Weed is doing.'

He could feel the constant cold gaze of envy.

It was a piece of armor made of a material that absorbs light. They walked endlessly. It was a special and luxurious item that only a few adventurers had and it was rare just to see one.

"He must be a great person."

"Really, who the hell is he?"

"Perhaps he looks a little like the sculptor from before?"

“No, I feel they look alike but...”

“It looks similar.”

“Yes. That’s Sculptor Weed.”

The saying birds of the same feather flock together was not wrong.

The other people could barely notice that it was Weed’s face.

The face that seemed to say poverty and need!

Weed looked rather ordinary so he was relieved that others would not recognize him. However, the pedestrians’ reactions were different.

“That armor must be fake.”

“Well, mostly. It must be coated with Mithril on the surface only or something.”

“It doesn’t even look that good.”

Weed and Mapan ignored the reaction of the people behind them and went to Yurin.

“Yurin, let’s go.”

Yurin was in the middle of painting a picture when she looked up.

“Yes, Oppa! But, your clothes...”

“Huh?”

Weed looked over his clothes slowly.

“Why do you say that? Is it because I’m wearing the Talrock armor?”

“Oh, it’s nothing really. It’s just a little unique...”

"...."

Blatantly showing off his armor!

In fact, he had worn the armor so that his sister could be proud of him. Weed, Mapan, and Yurin walked towards the center where they heard the people chattering.

“Did you see the vacant lot in the center? Where are you preparing to go hunt at?”

“The party has Orcs, a high level trader, and Geomchis...what quest is it?”

“I heard Sculptor Weed is coming too.”

They had already seen the battle against the dragon that was aired on the television.

A bunch of muscular guys fought together closely in a group, mainly using swords. The Geomchis were not unknown.

Many had become famous by going around challenging people in the pursuit of martial arts.

Now the people's attentions were focused since the Geomchis had now gathered in Morata and were now ready to leave for somewhere.

“That's an enormous amount of supplies!”

“Has a new hunting ground developed near Morata?”

“I don't know, maybe.”

If you came to the northern village of Morata then you shouldn't be a beginner. Most of them caught on quickly and realized something was going on.

They noticed the strange signs that were going on in the village.

The massive hoarding of groceries and the Geomchis were gathering!

Not to mention Pale's conspicuous party adorned with pretty good weapons and armor.

The third fact was by far the most attention grabbing.

The new Orc species!

Orcs could speak human tongue and they traveled between villages, but this was the first time they have seen one.

"It's really ugly."

"Look at the ass. Every step is like a joke."

"It's bigger than my head!"

Seechwi felt delighted.

It was more comfortable for her now that people could approach her more easily rather than looking cool and glamorous like an ice queen.

“Look at this! Chwichwit chwiit!”

“Those nasal sounds!”

Weed, Mapan, and Yurin went to the vacant lot in the center to see that it was overflowing with thousands of onlookers. Because of the rumors people had come from all over Morata.

All sorts of people were waiting to see where they were going to go; from adventurers, travelers, hunters, clerics, and bards.

Surka felt awkward from all of this attention.

“These people are really looking at us a lot.”

She moved away and hid behind Irene. She could never handle so many people focusing their attention on her.

“It’s still less than the number of people in Rosenheim, but it’s growing fast.

They agreed about that.

“Yeah, doesn’t it feel exhilarating to explore a new part of the continent?”

Morata was the key city in the North!

Over a thousand people came a day and they were always going off on adventures in new hunting grounds.

People were currently active in exploring the North and the number was increasing. They came in earnest from the central continent and soon the number of people in the north will be equal to everywhere else.

There were approximately 50000 users in the North. Given the large size of the continent, the remote areas were largely unexplored. People would form parties to go on quests, hunting, or adventures. A lot of people would gather in the cities to share information. Other people rushed to Morata to sightsee.

Looking around, Weed asked.

“Are you all prepared to go?”

“Yes.”

“Yea!”

Hwaryeong and Zephyr replied confidently.

Pale lightly patted Maylon on the shoulder.

“No matter what danger we’re in, I will protect you.”

“I’ll always trust Pale-nim.”

Romuna, Irene, and Surka were also ready to go.

More often than not, they would go with Weed to hunt. The feeling of being short of breath and the excitement in their chests.

Irene’s eyes were twinkling.

‘Whenever you go hunting with Weed, something interesting always happens.’

Every time someone died, priests would always feel sad about it.

Weed’s rate of hunting was 2~3 times faster than normal. However, such high paced hunting was always rewarding.

‘I have to do my part...so that no one dies.’

On the other hand, the Geomchis did not seem to be nervous at all.

“Ahem! Departure is taking quite some time.”

"Since it's taking some time are we going to eat?"

Weed shook his head.

“That’s not it. We’re leaving soon.”

They were about to leave.

The onlookers were waiting to see what they were going to do with anticipation in their eyes.

Morata’s village elder quickly ran up to him.

“Count!”

The village elder called out to Weed.

"Did he say Count?"

"Did he call him the Count?"

The surprised onlookers were in an uproar. A user was the Count of Morata! But even more surprising for them was that the village elder called Weed the Count.

“I don’t believe it!”

“A sculptor has never made it to even a Baron or Viscount but he’s a Count.”

"If he's the Count of Morata, then that means he's the ruler of the entire province."

Looking around, Weed replied.

"Village elder, if you make such a fuss then you'll trouble the village guards."

He took on the personality as if he was a character in a historical drama.

Counts were considered one of the highest of the nobility. They had more authority than almost everyone in the kingdom.

The village elder said.

"The village is almost out of food."

"..."

"Due to the increase in the number of tourists and residents, there is not enough land so we need to expand. You have to build a trading post for the commercial development of stores for grocery and fabric exchange."

Weed was listening to this story and realized that it was dangerous.

He could only come to one conclusion.

‘Money! It could only be that he’s asking me for money.’

The village elder was shedding tears.

“We need money. There must be more funds to invest in building and repairing houses for the town.”

Zephyr and Pale felt bad for the village elder.

‘It’ll be hard to get money out of Weed with that kind of story.’

‘It’s impossible. You have a higher chance of finding a whale in a well than getting money from Weed.’

Instead it would have been better for the village elder to talk to Mapan about such matter. Traders often collected money and would usually be able to spend about a thousand gold. But then the unthinkable happened.

“Oh! If you only needed money then why didn’t you just say so earlier?”

Weed let out a long sigh as he opened his backpack. He then pulled out all of his money.

By saving his money by using it as little as possible, he managed to save 30,000 gold. By selling the gold and silver treasures of the Nifleheim Empire, he managed to earn 230 thousand gold.

That meant he had a total of 260 thousand gold.

He handed every single bit of it over to the village elder.

“If you must, try to use as much money as necessary for the residents.”

“Is, is this really okay? This is far too much money..”

“Of course. It is your responsibility to judge Morata’s needs.”

“Thank you. Thank you very much.”

Ttiring!

Large scale investment in the Morata Province.It will allow Morata to flourish to the days of the old Nifleheim Empire!Its past glory was long gone in the flow of time leaving it bare and starving.

Only its residents and frail houses remained.

But now these new investment will fund the effort for the residents to become diligent citizens.

For three months, productivity will increase by 30%.

The area of the village will expand.

Use of the castle has become available.

The population growth rate has improved.

Buildings will be constructed immediately depending on the characteristics of Morata.

Bar :

Increases tax revenue and satisfaction of residents but affects Public Security adversely.

Blacksmith :

Increases the technology of the town. Increases the productivity of the residents.

Trading Post:

A place where you can trade with merchants. Brings in tax

revenue as well as supplement the town's needs.

Inn:

A place where travelers can stay. Travelers become more lively than if you simply left them in the village.

Textiles :

Cloth weaving and leather polishing. Morata's specialty increases the amount of leather and textile related quests.

Vigilantes :

Residents will form groups to protect public security. They can't fight the nearby monsters but they will be enough to catch village shoplifters. Help with public security increases commercial development.

Mercenary Guild :

Investigates the surrounding village and gives quests on a regular basis to combat the monsters. Operates largely on taxes. Whenever successful, public security is increased and fame will be given.

A small Church of Freya :

A place of the believers of the Church of Freya to pray. Sacrilegious buildings cannot be build in the village.

Due to the blessings of Freya, the residents will have increased grain production. Urban development increases, you can now build more buildings. Proposed Maintenance - Once the village has produced enough buildings, tax rates can be set, commercial, military power, technology, security, and public policies for increasing residents can be set in the budget.

Currently 50% of the budget has been set in regional development and state budget, the rest will be distributed.

To raise funds for investment, you can reduce the amount of control you have over the region.

Improve or expand the province to gain more control. Stats that can affect the local politics have been generated.

After the first stage of development, you can raise taxes. Excessive investment in welfare of public security may increase the satisfaction of the residents however, as the town's deficit grows, the position as Count will be compromised.

Weed put in a huge amount for wide scale development of Morata. It was an essential component for a village like that of the cities in the central continent.

Thrilled, the village elder said.

“My Lord, as you know, the amount of investment for half of the area has already been managed. The question is what do you wish to do with the remaining 130 thousand gold. First, how much do you wish to spend on village maintenance?”

It was used for the maintenance and construction of houses and roads in the village. If basic buildings are not made, then resident satisfaction, commerce, and public security will worsen. Developing these facilities help somewhat.

Judging the amount for buildings, Weed said.

"Ten thousand gold!"

- Ten thousand gold has been invested for town maintenance.

He only had about 130 thousand gold to work with. That was because the village elders would never work with a small amount to invest with.

“100 gold for each house should be enough.”

He judged that would be enough money to spend on the residents for now. Having to use the money he had saved up made him sick.

The village elder asked again.

“How much money do you want to spend on Security?”

Security reduced the crime rates in the village.

It made a big impact, since it affected the villagers’ satisfaction.

If crime occurs too frequently commercial development and production would degrade.

National emergencies.

In times of war, the citizens could be mobilized.

There are a number of elements affecting public security and residents with high crime rates would not participate.

Weed said cautiously.

"300 gold."

A timid investment!

The amount was very small, but thanks to the Freya Church policing Morata it was not a bad choice.

“How much money do you want to invest for Military?”

Political and military power increased whenever the region expands. The military would manage Morata's affairs. They would train knights and soldiers to fight monsters and defend the kingdom from enemies of other regions. They were loyal to the village. It was the cost to maintain a strong military power, but ultimately it was a means to increase territory.

Weed said simply.

"Zero gold!"

The village elder carefully checked.

"Do you mean that you do not want to invest in Military at all?"

"Yes."

- No money has been invested in Military.

The village elder's face became more cautious.

"Please set the amount that you want to invest in art."

As art develops, the villagers become more happy.

Free imagination and creativity was the basis for the growth of

culture...

Weed didn't even have to think.

“Zero gold!”

“Do you mean that you do not wish to invest in art?”

“Yes.”

Even if someone had put dirt in his eyes, he would never invest in art.

Art did not bring in any money!

Now one area remained.

“Please set the amount that you wish to invest in commercial development, which can be subdivided into several areas.”

As productivity and commercial development increased, so did the town's tax revenue.

It supported livestock and agriculture as well as the town's technology. It was also used to develop mines and construct buildings, increasing the town's productivity. Grocery stores increased the number of goods and quantity available from the

trading post.

Blacksmith development increased the quality and production of weapons, armors, and tools.

The production of specialty items will increase.

It was important to make conservative investments in the most specific areas as possible.

Weed flatly replied.

“119700 gold!”

“Such a huge investment in commercial development? I am concerned that you are too preoccupied with economic development.”

"Please invest 119700 gold in commercial development."

- 119700 gold has been invested in commercial development.

Mapan shut his mouth.

"So there is this side to Weed!"

At first he had thought that he was just a really cheap person.

“We didn’t know how he truly was all along.”

Once again this was the time to gauge Weed’s leadership. However, the truth was very different.

Weed’s judgement.

‘Morata is going to be an important city in the northern continent.’

The growing number of tourists!

Morata was safely under the Church of Freya’s protection for another year, so there was no risk to the village or residents from monster attacks.

Other users could attack Morata.

However, they were not willing to attack Morata because of the strength and influence the Church of Freya had.

Paladins from the Church of Freya were known to be some of the most strongest and unforgiving people.

‘So it’ll be safe for at least one year.’

Morata was set to develop.

Then in the future he could recover the money he had invested through a tremendous rate of exploitation!

Truly a vicious lord's dream!

*

While he was delayed by the village chief, Mapan, Pale and Geomchi were waiting.

Weed said.

"I'm done now. Let us depart from town!"

"Finally, let's go."

Surka said, smiling brightly as she took lead.

Mapan got the wagon. Whenever the wagon moved it left deep ruts in the ground. This was because the wagon was filled with different types of fabric and leather, jewelry, mountains of food, combat supplies, and other products.

If you pack too much it wouldn't move, but he had calculated and carefully placed the items so that the maximum quantity could be

taken.

“I’m going to see.”

“Let’s follow them.”

“I don’t wanna miss where they’re going!”

Onlookers followed along closely.

Once they found out Weed was the Count of Morata they became even more anxious.

It looked as if they would follow them to hell if they must!

Weed was moving in the direction of the west canyon.

“The area over there is unexplored?”

“I don’t know. There are a lot of hunting grounds and dungeons that have not been explored yet.”

The spectators were puzzled but they still followed. They had witnessed the large amount of supplies that brought along.

Weed’s party headed into the foggy woods of the west canyon.

Thickly grown trees blocked out the sky.

It was hard to see through the dense water vapor in the fog so visibility was bad.

Jjireureutring!

Swarms of insects buzzed ominously.

Monsters did not pop up from the fog in the forest. But the daylight was getting dimmer and sounds were getting closer.

“It’s okay.”

“There’s an exit on the other side, so we just have to wait until they reach the end.”

The people circled around cross the foggy forest.

Only one group continued into the forest while the others avoided it.

The people waited as Weed and his companions went into the fog.

They waited for one hour, two hours but they heard no news.

“Even if they’re moving slowly because of the wagon, it should be enough time for them to cross.”

“It doesn’t make sense that they’re not coming out.”

“Let’s go back to the entrance.”

Some people waited at the end while the others went back to the entrance. But they could not find any trace of Weed or his companions.

*

The Forest of Mist in the Eastern region!

Water vapor rises from the land, the trees releases the savage wind.

Hwaak! Hwaaak!

There was a strange feeling flowing from this place.

Even for a short while it was an unpleasant place to stay in.

Weed summoned Tori here.

“I call forth Vampire Lord Tori!”

Chattringtring!

They heard something as the ground shook.

A swarm of black flying bats!

He had red, bloodshot eyes with sharp canine fangs protruding.

There were a large number of vampire bats swimming throughout the fog. However, they did not attack Weed, Pale, or Geomchi.

They flapped their wings and flew lower. Some of them hung upside down on trees while others on the wagon.

Looking closely, each of them had the signs of nobility of the night from the protruding fangs and the elegant wings.

Maylon, Irene, Romuna, and Surka were surrounded by 200 thousand vampire bats.

"Oh my god! Look at those fangs."

"Look how lovely and adorable they are."

Surka and Romuna had a joy that no one else could quite understand. Some would say that bats are ugly creatures but they found them very cute.

Irene slowly went and put a bat on her hand.

“Pretty wings.”

"..."

Irene also had weird tastes.

Maybe it was because she didn't have to worry about them trying to attack and eat her.

Vampire Lord Tori knelt down respectfully.

“Master, I've come to take you to Todeum.”

Tori gave the the utmost splendid manner towards Weed.

Weed nodded in approval.

“Yea, let's leave now.”

Tori was also glad to hear that.

He could finally get away from Weed's outrageous tyranny!

Tori circled around them.

"Take care Master, once we get to the kingdom. If we, by chance, meet again."

"Is that supposed to be a threat?"

"Well, more like intimidation..."

Weed gently hit Tori on the shoulder.

"Do you want to get beat?"

"That, that is not the case."

"Now you're going to live your life with pride and good fortune?"

"That would be more comfortable."

"Then do you want to get beat then?"

"..."

Weed scared Tori again, beating him here where there was no doctor to heal him.

The Geomchis', Irene, and all the party were waiting here, where they wouldn't use up their Stamina.

'It's just like a van with bad brakes! The fact that you make a single wrong decision could mean death at any time.'

According to Weeds philosophy, if he didn't beat them enough, they would get rebellious.

Beating that rebellious spirit out of him.

Being beaten at any time leaves an aftertaste. And being caught so suddenly one day.

The times between beatings were very short.

Soon you start acting more positively.

Just like how Death Knight Van Hawk was compliant.

Weed stuck true to his principles and threatened Tori in their last moments together.

"Let us go, Master!"

“Yea.”

Weed, leading the way, climbed on top of the vampire bats. Then he slowly rose into the sky.

The humans were flying as well as the carriage!

The vampire bats stuck to the lower part of the carriage to carry it.

*

A shaman with long straight hair and a violet wand walked into the entrance of Morata.

She looked around and said.

"Is this where Weed is? I wonder if I came on time?"

Her name was Da'in.

In Lavias she was the woman who played around with monsters with blessings, curses, healing, attacks, and magic!

She was now focused on going around the Versailles Continent and playing in party hunting quests. She had heard the rumors

about the village of Morata and its outstanding Tower of Light.

Weed was said to be the one that sculpted it.

“Maybe it will be that Weed that I know.”

Da'in could remember that Weed was a sculptor as well as a great fighter.

The sculptures he had made were meager. Since his carving skills were low, they didn't even become fine piece.

There were sculptures that resembled monsters.

"He must have gotten a lot better by now."

Listening to a rumor, Da'in had guessed that this was the Weed she was looking for.

A lot of people had the username Weed, but it was uncommon for them to be sculptors as well.

Thus she came to the northern continent and mingled into the village of Morata.

*

Gaston and Pavo arrived in Morata village.

"There it is."

"So difficult. It's even harder for people like us with low Stamina to come such a far distance."

"True, if it weren't for those generous merchants who gave us a ride in the middle of the trip then we would never have made it."

Pavo looked back in reminiscence.

During the time in the northern expedition they faced annihilation at the hands of the dragon's Breath.

Pavo thought they were bound to lose their lives.

"I really regret it. I should not had such high expectations in the first place. What could an architect and a painter do in such a battle anyways? We went along, suffered all kinds of difficulties, and didn't even get to see it properly."

"Yea. It was harder for us to go into combat when we're so powerless."

Architect and painter!

They were saying all sorts of complaints about their profession.

When they turned on the television they had seen that the expedition was a success, but they were stuck back at the City of Art, Rhodium. They missed out on the chance for fame and the savory rewards.

“Yea, there’s a limit to how much growth we can get in Rhodium, Pavo.”

“Yea, that’s true. Our reputation won’t grow in a place like that.”

A characteristic of artists.

Repeated works in one place gave less fame. The difference is negligible at first, but difference between the first and the tenth work was considerable.

A faint light was in Gaston’s eyes.

“How about we go see other cities?”

“Other cities? Are you suggesting we settle down in a new city?”

“Let me persuade you how it is more rewarding. Its uncommon for painters and architects in Rhodium to get jobs but there is the whole Versailles Continent. There’s nothing keeping you here.”

“I understand what you mean. What city do you want to go to?”

Gaston already had a place in mind.

“I’m going to Morata.”

“The village with Sculptor Weed? That’s bringing back the bad memories that I had in the northern continent.”

“I was also there but I did have fun.”

“Damn you’re right. But can we go?”

It was difficult for people to go to a new place. It was even more difficult for production classes.

Gaston sighed.

“We can at least try. See it that way.”

Then the two middle-aged men underwent a number of challenges to get to Morata. They had to go through dangerous zones that were teeming with monsters and sometimes they were chased by bees. Several times they barely escaped and made it safely to a town!

They lay down in the street, exhausted, until they got the help of

a passing by merchant.

Gaston shook his head.

“It’s really hard for profession like ours to get by.”

Pavo laughed at that.

“We did arrive safely though.”

If it had not been for the digging skills, then they would have almost died. They would dig a hole in the ground and hide until the monsters left. This would not have been possible if they did not see the monsters approach in advance.

Thankfully for Gaston, the skills worked exceptionally well in the snow.

They could just dig a hole anywhere and hide.

Painters and architects with poor survivability but they had their ways to cope.

Even so, it was important that they had caught a ride with that merchant or they would not have been able to survive their crisis.

Fortunately they met in the middle of the northern continent

where it was still relatively safe.

Gaston looked at his clothes.

“Wow, your clothes are so dirty.”

“You didn’t even wash it once.”

Gaston and Pavo were basically wearing rags, but the people around didn’t seem to mind.

“They must be travelers that are new to the town.”

“Look at how much they have suffered.”

It was difficult for thousands of the people that had come to Morata. Many people would arrive looking as if they have not bathed in days. Gaston was a little surprised about Morata as he washed his face.

‘This city is lively.’

Pavo thought the same.

‘There’s a lot of people. Judging by just this there are more than 3000 people in the village.’

They did know that this was just the entrance to the village and that people flocked daily. Quite a number of people were busy walking around the village. Merchants had opened stalls and were selling to people as were chefs selling food.

“Pavo, I think it was a good idea to come to Morata.”

“This is an all-new frontier of a developing city! It’s not bad and I don’t know if we can do anything here but it’ll be fun.”

Then an issue came up.

A Morata resident walked up quickly and grabbed Pavo.

“Are you skilled in architecture?”

Pavo trembled as he replied.

“Yes, I am an architect.”

“Good! Did you know that my wife has recently become pregnant? The child is going to be born soon and I need a new house. I’m busy and I don’t have time to do it. Please help me out, you won’t regret it!”

Ttiring!

The village house for a couple. The home for his wife and a young baby. Relieve his concerns by building a durable house as soon as possible.

He wants his house build two to three places in one of the vacant lots west of the apple tree, wood and stone can be used as building materials.

Difficulty : D

Compensation : 26~309 gold.

Varies depending on the size of the completed house and the building materials.

Quest restriction:

Architect profession only.

Pavo nodded his head.

“Please leave it to me. I’ll build you a very sturdy house. It will withstand all sorts of storms.”

- You have accepted the quest.

Houses made by digging out stone.

A lot of the city was busy in building new houses for the residents.

The villagers were even building a shopping district.

The residents were able to somewhat construct this much.

But the quality of the houses affect the villagers' satisfaction and improve public security. On a certain level, productivity increases.

Even with a few people helping out, you still needed the professional help of an architect.

A kingdom. The construction of a wall around the town of Morata.

In order to ensure the safety and stability of the town, they built a wall and expanded the city.

A lot of people were interested in participating.

It was announced that there would be a new village made outside the wall.

Morata village was still underdeveloped. They had to create new fields and waterways.

Large scale investment in Morata was rapidly changing the environment for the poor.

Opportunity.

These were the best kind of quests for an architect.

The opportunity to actively participate in the development of a city!

Pavo pulled up his sleeves.

“We need to work fast! Hands on jobs are very scarce. We’re going to need people to work on this.”

“Haha, I’ll help.”

Gaston could not conceal his envy as he saw Pavo working.

Having issues with your profession was a most sorrowful thing.

Quests were very few and you work for next to nothing so often you end up starving.

However, in Morata, they were in great need of an architect. There were god knows how many jobs for him.

‘Architect was so much better. I’m never going to get recognized as an artist.’

However, things then changed for Gaston.

Residents came up to him.

“Can you help me? I need a signboard for a shop that I’m going to open.”

It was not a very difficult job to do.

Then the village elder came.

“I want you to draw a picture on the city gates as a symbol of the village.”

Various doors of opportunity opened up for Gaston.

He was even asked to draw a map about monsters in the vicinity. When the map was completed, it could be sold to adventurers and he would get fame.

He even got jobs to make paintings for the castle.

The village elder said.

“Our lord is a lover of art. I think that my Lord would want to give some support to the artists in his city.”

Tons of Weed’s investment was used to develop the town.

Aside from donations to the Church of Freya, the village elder put large sums into art and culture.

*

Weed and his companions flew on the vampire bats.

“Kyyyaaaah!”

The acrophobic Surka screamed.

The bats did not have as much power as the Wyverns, who had large stature.

Cluster! Cluster!

Whenever she made eye contact with the ground she would be overcome with fear.

It was very shocking.

“So this is how the adventure starts...”

It was a grandiose start to the adventure of a lifetime. This was the kind of adventure that Maylon had fantasized about.

Pale was at a loss.

“Maylon-nim.”

“Yes?”

“Aren’t the bats scary?”

“Well...”

“Then again, we are heading to the kingdom of the vampires so riding on bats will be an experience that we can’t miss.”

Maylon was convinced.

It was slightly different than how she imagined but one does not ride on top of bats often!

It was incredible to think if there were people flying above the ground on bats.

‘So this is Weed’s adventure.’

Pale was expecting the same thing.

This was the next place that they have gone to since the City of Heavens, Lavias. They spent a long time going on quests and adventures.

The bats flew for a long time until Morata was out of sight.

The faraway lakes and mountains looked smaller than their fingernails. They were so high up that the village looked like a dot.

Then they stopped in place!

The vampire bats were flapping in place.

After waiting for a few moments, Weed asked.

“Tori, are you lost?”

“No, Master.”

Tori replied in a relaxed voice.

“How much longer do we have to go?”

“That’s not it, the place is right here.”

“Then why?”

“Master, the noble Vampire Kingdom Todeum is in the world of the night. We will never be able to get into Riga during the day!”

“Then...”

“We have to wait until it is night.”

They remained hanging in the sky listening to the sound of the air.

Weed let out a deep sigh as Tori said it so naturally.

‘I brought my entire party. I wasted an entire day because of this ignorant bastard!’

Weed was regretting. A whole day had been lost.

“Tori.”

“What’s with the look?”

“Come over here, closer.”

“I don’t want to go over there.”

Tori had finally noticed. Weed was smiling brightly.

“Didn’t you say that you would send me and my party there shortly?”

“Yes.”

Tori revealed his fangs and laughed grinning.

“This is the last time I think I’ll have to say goodbye. Weren’t you fond of my sculptures?”

“A sculpture you say, Master? Master’s sculptures are very beautiful.”

Tori came over.

His face showed was one without any sign of doubt.

‘You are an ignorant man.’

Weed narrowed his eyes finely. Then he started beating him.

Papapapapak!

A cool and playful sound was ringing in the air.

There was the scene that Mapan always remembered seeing. Pale and Yurin just looked on.

Hwaryeong's calm eyes lit up.

“So strong. He’s so cool.”

He firmly hit him around. Weed’s actions were good.

Geomchi nodded.

“It seems I taught him correctly.”

The Geomchis sympathized with Weed.

“He’s only smacking instead of punching.”

Geomchi₃ had a tingly sensation in his hands.

“I want to try hitting too...”

Geomchi₄ agreed.

“It would be nice if I could get a vampire I could hit around.”

“Geomchi4, we’ll see if we get a chance to get one.”

“So I will.”

Irene was forced to sit in the front.

This kind of thinking was certainly not normal!

‘One only thinks about money and the others are narrow minded and violent!’

It was just what Irene expected from Weed’s philosophy. Nevertheless, she felt bad for Tori.

Weed could feel the beating he was giving.

He used high number of attacks in rapid succession giving off big and strong echos.

Weed honed his techniques by beating Tori!

His sword fighting involved increasing the number of basic attacks.

Whenever the skills were used correctly against a monster, he dealt huge damage.

But if the attack was a bit off or if he lost the flow of the attack then the skill was canceled. It was necessary to properly activate and use combat skills.

Because of this, it was a skill that you needed to use in Royal Road.

Surka was impressed.

‘He’s punching properly!’

She checked for anything that she could learn from Weed. Given her character class, she watched to see if she could learn to deal more damage. Daytime had passed and now it was night.

The door to Todeum was now open.

They were standing on ground instead of the sky!

Kurururang!

Deeper and deeper they went into the unknown swamp.

Tori said.

“This is the entrance to the Kingdom of Todeum!”

At the end of the description he plunged into the hole and rapidly descended.

“Kyaaaaaaah!”

Surka’s feminine scream!

Almost at the same time, a snaky voice erupted forth.

“The kingdom of the nobility of the night! You are welcome to enter Todeum! Kuehuehuehuehue.”