**Chapter 127: The 12th floor (3)**

“Under the power of the divine light, may the Mother Goddess bless you. Temperance of sexual desire.”

At the prayer of Hitolis, a faithful priest of the virginity-oriented Cult of Mother Goddess, a powder of light descended upon Ellie's head.

Ellie's dazed expression changed for the better, drooling from her mouth.

“Is that the miracle that priests and paladins use to suppress their lust?”

“Indeed. Sounds like a bunch of obsessive virgins.”

Joy Hog and Lammel looked at Hitolis and nodded.

“Hitolis. Did you suppress the full effect of the aphrodisiac?”

Hitolis shook her head in confusion at my question.

“I gave her some first aid, but the Labyrinth's aphrodisiac is very strong.”

She swallowed the last part and looked at Ellie.

The nape of her neck and long elfin ears were still red, proof that the effects of the aphrodisiac hadn't completely worn off.

“Is there anything else we can do?”

“There are only two ways out of this: we can either make a quick trip to the fountain on the tenth floor of the Labyrinth and bathe in its healing waters, or-”

Hitolis left it at that and swallowed hard.

She seemed very reluctant to speak in her own words.

Seeing the look on her face, Jubeel opened her mouth.

“Or poke it deep into her womb with a baby-producing stick, and chew it cool.”

“Lord, Jubeel, you're so vulgar!”

“Well. Did I say the wrong thing?”

“T, you didn't say anything wrong, but you did say something wrong.”

“What are you going to do, Balkan?”

The party's eyes turned to me, the only clean slate in the party.

“This stimulant is quite effective. Once you start, you will have to have sex in this spot for at least three days and nights without sleeping. Of course, it must be vaginal sex. Only when the uterus is filled with semen will it be recognized as ‘real sex’.”

 Once you're in a relationship, you're in it for the long haul.

I weighed the risks of the relationship, the fatigue that would come afterward, and the dangers that would arise during the relationship.

“Let's get to the 10th floor as fast as we can.”

“Tch.”

The rest of the party clicked their tongues. Well, they were just being verbal.

“I thought about it carefully. Masturbation might be fine, but in a labyrinth, having sex is too risky.”

 Sex in the Labyrinth, with all its dangers?

I didn't have to think long to realize it was insane.

‘If you have tremendous confidence in your abilities, then you might not know.’

 Sadly, this was not true for me today.

Having made my decision, it was time to move.

“I’ll carry Ellie. My back is light thanks to the subspace backpack.”

 “No. I'll carry her. It's not safe for you to lift her.”

“What?”

I was about to pick Ellie up with room to spare, but Joy Hog stopped me.

“What good does a female who has been on estrogen get from being carried on your back and smelling the stinky scent of a male who hasn’t washed for a week?”

“Don’t try to seduce Ellie, who is barely holding on to her senses. It’ll only speed up ovulation and make her even hornier.”

“Come on, her breasts pressed tightly against your back muscles, it’ll be dangerous⋯”

“Yeah. It is dangerous..”

Joy Hog, Lammel, Hitolis, and Jubeel, the four female party members all nodded in agreement.

“⋯⋯Yes, well. Okay, let's go.”

I scratched the nape of my neck in embarrassment.

The Labyrinth it’s not so easy after all.

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Still on the ninth floor, Ellie's sticky moans echoed through the labyrinth.

“Ellie. Just a little quieter. I know it's hard, but hang in there.”

“Whew… Yeah…”

Ellie replied, gasping for breath.

As much as we'd like to speed up, it's hard to do it.

The ninth floor is a little smaller than the average floor, but it has a higher percentage of traps.

It feels similar to the second floor, but the level of traps is much higher than it was seven floors ago.

We'll need to tread carefully at all times to avoid dangerous traps such as beast traps, arrow traps, detonators, and transition traps.

“Six minotaurs up ahead!!!”

“Purrrrrr!”

On top of that, there were oncoming monsters to deal with.

No, not goblins or other mobs, but minotaurs.

If I hadn't had my cognition fully activated, I would have been in a lot of trouble with the surprise attack and traps.

 The minotaur horde, realizing the ambush, immediately charged at us.

“Purrrrrrr!”

In response, I pulled Bernie from my back and swung it at the first minotaur to jump in.

-Zzzzzzzzzzzz!!!

With a resounding crack, the minotaur's upper torso was ripped off.

The explosive power from her enormous size and weight was already beyond the power of a normal axe.

“Purrrrrr!”

The vanguard lunged forward and the instinctively terrified minotaurs paused for a moment.

No doubt, it was a golden opportunity.

“Lammel! Now!”

“Fireball!”

With a short shout, Lammel unleashed her magic.

The minotaurs hit by the blazing fireball let out a terrible scream and the two furthest forward were killed instantly.

The remaining three were engulfed in flames.

“Purrrrrr!”

The three flaming minotaurs charged like warriors facing death.

As if to say, “Feel our pain.”

-Pow!

Joy Hog, who had left Ellie with Hitolis, knocked two of them back with her shield.

“Purrrrrrr!”

“Don't you dare!”

One broke through the restraint and Jubeel charged him, but.

 “What?!”

The blade, surrounded by a cloudy sword energy, failed to strike the minotaur's neck and bounced away.

Immediately afterward, the flames surrounding the minotaur gradually died down.

Magi was revealed on the left side of the body.

“Hitolis!”

“The forces of Mother Goddess.”

Hitolis' Holy Power buff.

Jubeel’s blade is imbued with the holy power of pure white light.

[Blessing of Radiance]

I joined in, and I cast my own Blessing of Radiance on Bernie.

[Aaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!]

I could hear Bernie's screams, but for now, I focused on the situation and swung my axe.

Zzzzzzzzzz!

Jubeel’s sword sliced through the minotaur's magi stained neck, and my axe sliced through its waist.

Joy Hog soon followed.

-Thud!

The battle was over, and I drove my axe into the ground.

“We've still got a way to go to the descent portal. Maybe we should rest here for the night.”

“Why don't we just rest for a while, grab what we need, and make a quick trip to the tenth floor?”

Joy Hog shook her head at my suggestion.

“I'd love to, but Hitolis and Lammel are at their wits' end. It's dangerous to move any further today, and we might run into another trap up ahead. This area seems to be trap-free, so it's a good place to rest.”

Clerics and mages have lower stamina than the main combatants, and when their stamina drops, the entire party's performance suffers.

Going forward with less than full stamina and conditioning could put the party in greater danger than I had imagined.

The leader of the party is Joy Hog and she spoke reasonably and convincingly.

Still, there was a nagging feeling in the pit of my stomach, probably because I was worried about Ellie.

“I see, I was being overly ambitious.”

“It's okay. It's the owner's daughter, I get it.”

Joy Hog was a fairly common-sensical and decent dwarf when she wasn't drinking.

Fortunately, she was sympathetic.

Afterward, the party butchered the minotaur's carcass, stripped it of its most profitable parts, and prepared to set up shop.

“Ugh. It's the ninth floor after all. Good quality minotaur hide, huh?”

“Four of them were burned to a crisp, but I guess they're still a little salty. As expected, the pay is different when you get close to the middle class.”

I looked around at Joy Hog and Jubeel cleaning up the byproducts, Lammel preparing a quick meal, and Hitolis tending to Ellie, then back at Bernie.

‘After the fifth floor, and again on the sixth, there's a monster with magi.’

The frequency of encounters was similar to the previous labyrinth, but there was one oddity.

During this labyrinth exploration, I have not once seen a monster with magi below the 5th floor.

 Is that really a coincidence?

[You've fallen into this state, so you've influenced the labyrinth in some way, haven't you? Huh?]

Tsk!

[Keuhieeeeet?!]

I wiped the blood from the blade of my axe and slapped the golden ornament with my blessed hand, making it vibrate and let out a low moan.

With Gluttony slain, no magi monsters will appear below the fifth floor.

Though it was only speculation at the moment, it was quite plausible.

'Idelbert said that she would reveal the secrets of the Labyrinth to me when I become a top-tier Intermediate explorer, so I should be able to get answers to many questions then.’

So for now, let's just worry about growing to a higher realm.

“A vibrating axe. That's interesting.”

“Might be useful.”

Each of the party members looked at the axe in admiration.

Certainly, it's not as majestic as it looks.

“Isn't it cool, she's shy even though she looks like this.”

-Taaaaah!

[Hiiiit⋯!]

I flicked the gold ornament so they could get a better look at Bernie.

[⋯Hooh, you stupid, foolish bastard⋯ Heheh⋯ Hooh, you'll regret it, blood, mortal subject⋯ How dare you use this body like a lowly whore⋯!]

Hoooooooo!

[Hooooooong?!]

“Oooh. Balkan, you're touching it so hard.”

“⋯What is it? Why is water actually coming out of the axe blade?”

“Hmm. A substitute for drinking water? That's a great feature. I won't have to worry about dying of thirst in the Labyrinth.”

[⋯⋯]

After a reasonable amount of deliberation, I put the stunned Bernie back on my back.

We ate a light meal and retired to bed.

Except for Ellie, I was the first one to go to bed, and I woke up according to my usual routine.

“Hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo.”

After a night's rest, the other party members recovered, but Ellie's condition worsened.

 “Heh, heh, heh.”

With her mouth open in a daze, Ellie reached out and flicked her nipple with her own hand.

Koooooowwww!

“Huh?! Hiiit?!”

With a powerful splash, her skirt rose slightly and then sank.

Even Jubeel was frightened, and the hand of a misguided genius was upon her.

The results were plain to see.

Overnight, Ellie's skirt had soaked through and had already faded.

I swallowed hard and walked over to the disheveled woman.

“⋯Ellie. Are you okay, are you awake?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.”

“How many fingers do you see?”

I held up one finger in front of Ellie and waved it.

“Oppa’s dick⋯? Uhhhh.”

He seemed to be losing his mind.

Ellie's eyes narrowed as she realized the embarrassment of her absurd answer.

She pressed her wizard hat down tightly to hide her face.

“Do you think you can hold out?”

“I can stand it⋯ I'm sorry for being a burden⋯”

Ellie replied, tightening her grip on the hand that was unconsciously moving to her nipple.

“It's okay, it's not a party that's going to collapse because you're a burden, just relax.”

She seemed sad that she had caused trouble to the party, so I patted her on the head to tell her not to worry.

 “Heeeeeeeee?!”

Ellie's whole body shook, and she cried out.

“⋯⋯”

I looked at Ellie's condition, which was worse than I could have imagined.

Ellie again received the miracle of sexual abstinence from Hitolis.

We resumed our trek back up the ninth floor, and after half a day of traveling, we reached the end of the floor.

We found a portal to the tenth floor, but Ellie was too foggy to take a magic sample.

“Joy Hog. Hold on.”

I called Joy Hog over to talk to her separately.

“⋯What do you mean, if you go to the tenth floor, you might pass out for a while?”

She looked at me with a questioning look on her face.

When I had reached the 5th floor through the transition trap, I had been knocked unconscious and passed out.

The tenth floor is a multiple of five, the second floor after the fifth.

It’s a place that [the one wrapped in light] told me was dangerous.

There, I didn't know what else could happen to me but it's good to be insured against anything.

“It's a bit complicated to explain. It's not that I don't want to, I just don't know where to start.”

“⋯Hmm. The multiples of 5 can be skipped with the fountain scroll, so that shouldn’t be a problem. Got it.”

 Joy Hog nodded, unperturbed by what might have seemed like a questionable statement.

The trust we built up over time had paid off.

It was nice to have a trusted party in times like this.

“Come on, then.”

Holding onto each other to keep from falling, we stepped through the descent portal to the tenth floor.

-Whoosh.

With a slight feeling of floating.

Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!

At a speed barely perceptible to me, a tremendous impact hit my body.

“Kahak?!”

“What, what, Balkan⋯”

The party members' voices quickly faded away.

In an instant, my entire body relaxed.

-Kudududud. Dududududud.

Unusual sounds came from my joints, muscles, etc.

“Ugh!”

Along with tremendous pain, enough to send my consciousness flying.

I desperately clung to my fading consciousness and through the unexpected pain, I quickly scanned my surroundings and racked my brain to assess the situation.

‘There are no enemies around.’

That meant I wasn't being attacked from the outside.

In other words, something was happening inside my body.

“⋯⋯”

I collapsed, unable to scream, and stifled the vomit that was about to rise.

[???'s blessings respond to your growth.]

[Reorganizing your body to be more efficient.]

 An unfamiliar phrase flashed before my eyes.