**Chapter 13: Preparation (2)**

There are truly many types of troublesome customers.

"Hey. Male there. Come over here for a second."

"I can't believe you're dressed like this in a bar. I'm always looking for a man who's willing to mate."

The first type. The mating type.

These are people who have experienced a lot in their lives and the only thing they can do is have sex with men.

Their main attack patterns include blatant flirting, grabbing you by the clothes and pulling you down, and staggering over you while pretending to be drunk.

“Wow... these abs are amazing...it’s crazy. Now, even if I die, I have no regrets.”

The squirrel beastman, who was stumbling around like she was drunk and hugging me tightly and stroking my abs, said as she was dragged by the collar by Diana.

"That's crazy. Harassing someone in a cozy inn on a winter night..."

"But I understand a million times over. I'm torn right now."

"Actually, isn't she the real winner⋯?"

Although people were afraid of the sight, they looked at the squirrel beastman being dragged away with envy that they could not hide.

No matter how scary Diana is, it would be a shame to miss the opportunity to make a fuss over the male in front of them.

No matter how scared she was, she couldn't pass up the chance to pet him.

Diana was often stuck in the kitchen cooking.

I was an employee, so I couldn't go around beating up customers like I did with that maiden or the beggars.

"You don't have to treat them like guests! If they touch you, yell out 'no, don't do it' or call my name."

"So, is it okay if I resist a little strongly?"

"⋯Yes? Uhhh. Sure. But wouldn't that be a little hard?"

I could understand Diana's concern. Most of the customers who came to her tavern were explorers.

The menu's prices were higher than the surrounding area because the portions were generous and the flavors were good, so explorers were the ones who could afford it.

In other words, most of the patrons were armed to the teeth.

"That's okay," I say, "most of them can handle a little bit of a beating."

Now that I'm armed and have permission, I can fight back.

The second type of customer is the drunken type. This was the most common type.

"Customer. Customer. You shouldn't be pumping milk here. The precious milk is running out.”

"Oooh⋯ Mama Joe⋯ Milk Mama⋯"

I even lifted up a cow that had completely broken down and was leaking milk from her teats.

“Keuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!?”

“Kaaaaaa! Someone please shut that harpy bastard’s mouth!”

Snorting in a range that would have torn a decibel meter to shreds, I clamped my hand over the outstretched mouth of the harpy male and threw him outside the store.

Still, I understood because he was a drunkard who could be found anywhere.

In addition to that, there were various troublesome customers like dine-and-dash types and those who complained about finding hair in their food, but considering it was the medieval times with no CCTV, their numbers were very low.

It goes without saying why.

“I heard hair came out of my cooking…Is this table by any chance?”

"Yep. The guests over here were freaking out."

Probably because the level 70 final boss popped out of the kitchen.

“Oh, no! Well, I never did that! I will eat it gratefully!”

"Okay. Enjoy your meal~"

As soon as they sensed Diana's unusual aura, the customers, who seemed to be new to the bar, turned pale, buried their faces in their plates, and continued eating.

The regulars, or those who seemed to know her, were well behaved and didn't cause too much trouble.

After serving Diana’s hot dishes and catching up, the time flew by and it was almost closing time.

But my work was just beginning.

"She's totally lost it. This crazy brat..."

Even with the door wide open and ventilated, the faint smell of milk didn't go away.

I cleaned up, washed the dishes, and freshened up.

"⋯Balkan, did you put away the bowl you left here⋯?"

"Yes. It was lying around, so I just put it away."

"⋯Oh, I see⋯Yes⋯I see⋯I see⋯"

I also looked at Diana, who seemed strangely weak, with strange eyes.

I wipe the table and polish the floor.

Still, it was a hundred times easier to clean in peace than to face the customers.

"Ms. Diana. I'm going to ditch you for a few minutes."

"Thank you. Do you remember where it is?"

"It's in the back alley, right? I'll be right there."

I left Diana, who was preparing soup for breakfast, and headed down the alley.

‘Come to think of it, this is where Diana gave me soup.’

It was only a few days ago, but those days were hell.

No one to trust, no money, hungry⋯

Compared to that, how are things now?

I'm saving some money, and thanks to her kindness, I can afford to eat three delicious meals a day.

It's no exaggeration to say that I've come a long way.

As I breathed in the cool night air of the darkened Labyrinth City, I reminisced about the past.

"What the hell."

In the distance, I spotted something black and clumpy.

Perhaps sensing my voice, the black figure scurried away.

-Tadadat!

The black figures jumped to their feet and began to run towards me.

The boundaries that had been loosening in the comfort and kindness of Diana's arms tightened.

"Stop, you bastards!"

My loud voice caught them off guard, and I calmly reached for my waistband, where I had always sheathed my axe but there was no axe now.

'I've let your guard down in such a short time. Damn.'

Even as I thought, my eyes tracked my enemies, six in number.

I tossed the trash forward, clenched my fists, and assumed a guard stance.

Come on. I don't know who it is, but where-.

"Huh!"

"Food! Food!"

"Get it!"

"⋯?"

They stopped running at me and reversed course, heading toward the food waste.

"Roh, roast beef⋯! There's a whole piece in there!"

"That's mine! Give it back!"

"Piss off! This is the one I found first!"

The six figures began to bicker among themselves as they rummaged through the trash.

One of them looked strangely familiar.

"Hey, you assholes."

So much so that it's okay to start swearing right away.

The beggars, who'd been engrossed in the trash, finally looked away from the trash and looked at me.

"You, you're the one!"

“Crazy helmet man!”

They finally recognized me. Well, they shouldn't recognize the guy they tried to rape.

“I said if I see you again, I’ll come after you.”

I clenched my fists and stumbled toward the beggars.

I needed a mental break from dealing with the truth. The bitches would be perfect punching bags.

"Now, wait! Ha, I have something to tell you!"

"Wow, Wang Cho!"

"Wait!"

The one in the lead, Wang Cho, as the beggars called her, stood up with her chest wide open and her posture regal.

Her posture became more and more bent as she walked, until she was in front of me, parallel to the ground.

It was an almost artistic dodge.

"Help me."

"I don't think you realize you're in a position to beg for your life."

"⋯I apologize, but we were out of our minds at the time. We haven't eaten in days, so we'll just pack up the trash and leave."

"Wow, Wang Cho⋯"

Wang Chao shuddered as she said that.

The group of beggars behind her also looked at me with trepidation, then followed Wang Chao and stuck their heads into me.

"⋯⋯"

I stared at them. They still looked like the dirty, foul-smelling beggars they were.

Behind them, I could see a torn garbage bag that looked like it had been torn open by a stray cat.

'Just kill them! The guards don't care about them, they're worthless! The dogs don't care about beggars' corpses! You're going to let them live after they tried to forcibly trample on your dignity? You always have to watch your back! You're going to let them get away with it?’

The demon inside me began to rant. He thoughtlessly told people to kill people and hoped to completely eliminate any potential threat.

The unpleasant truth is, my mind was starting to agree with it.

What's the point of letting them live? They'll probably go out again at night to kidnap and rape other innocent men and live out their miserable lives.

The most sensible answer is to kill them here.

"⋯⋯"

I know it's the answer. I know it all too well.

But⋯

‘Diana gave them soup, too.’

Just like she gave me soup, for no particular reason, purely out of the goodness of her heart.

I pondered for a moment, then relaxed my grip.

"Live straight…Do not forget the kindness of the soup you received the other day, and do not forget that it is because of that bowl of soup that I am letting you go here."

The beggars looked up at me blankly.

"Don't think about raping anyone, don't pickpocket, don't do anything bad, just live your life straight. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Okay, take that and get the fuck out of here."

The beggars, who were bobbing their heads up and down frantically, quickly scattered with their food waste bags.

I'm not great enough to extend goodwill or help others without pay like Diana did.

Nor am I good enough to throw my own blood money into the beggars' tin cans.

All I could offer was a word of advice and a single act of mercy.

"You're a little late today."

"I met some stray cats on the way."

"⋯huh. Did you?"

"Yes. They were going to scratch me, so I beat them well and sent them back."

"Yeah. Good work, Balkan. You finished faster than usual. Go back inside and get some rest. Oh, by the way, is there anything you'd like to eat tomorrow morning?"

"Anything Ms. Diana gives me will be delicious."

"⋯⋯⋯Oh, really, huh, huh, huh."

This was the least I could do to thank her for making breakfast. After all, Diana's cooking is really good.

Waving goodbye with a pleasant smile, I went back to my room, cleaned up, and got into bed.

The bar work wasn't physically demanding, but it was mentally exhausting.

That was good news, because it meant I could do something physically demanding during the day.

"One month to go⋯"

In a month, I'll have 20 silver coins.

I’ll prepare to enter the Labyrinth by then.

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My first goal was to get used to working at the inn.

On my first day, I was inexperienced.

First of all, working with a helmet naturally narrows my vision.

Because of this, I often bumped into people, and sometimes I almost spilled food because I lost my footing.

I thought, "This might be surprisingly useful training.”

I memorized the location of the table, quickly checked the positions and movements of the many people I could see through my narrow field of vision, and quickly made my way through the bustling crowd to serve the food.

Suddenly, I began to feel very fuzzy, not only about the people in front of me, but also about the people outside my field of vision.

'Fighting goblins has always been a difficult task.’

I can't tell you how many times I've been in a situation where I couldn't even defend myself, and a goblin shot me in the back of the head from outside my field of vision.

Honestly, I would have died five more times without the helmet.

Developing this sense would have prevented those situations.

After a few weeks of working on my awareness of my surroundings, I definitely bumped into fewer people and made less mistakes.

"Hmph!"

When I drew an axe from my waist and aimed at her, the troublemaker who had been sneaking up from behind recoiled in fear and backed away.

Most of the troublemakers could be defeated this way. After all, an axe is a great communicator.

"Have you heard that the first floor of the Labyrinth will be undergoing major construction starting next year?"

"Oh. You mean the labyrinth pioneering? I think it's going to be a bust, it's crazy."

By the time the vision problem was resolved, I was beginning to realize the true joy of working in a bar.

‘I can get information.’

Diana's Inn attracts a lot of people, and most of them are explorers.

As a character who already felt like I lacked common sense and learning, I was able to eavesdrop on their conversations, gaining a minimal amount of knowledge about the Labyrinth and the minutiae of the Labyrinth City.

"⋯This is ridiculous. Are you sure it was real that Diana picked a male staff member?"

"How many times have I told you it's real? I didn't know what the hell was going on when I first saw it."

"She's never held a man's hand in her life."

And after more than a month of making eye contact with people, I started to get a few customers who recognized me.

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Especially those two in the corner, with their masks covering their faces.

They sometimes came in late in the evening, but they were high level and seemed to know Diana.

"I'll get those for them."

"But you have a lot of work to do, can I-"

"I'll do it. Okay?"

"Yeah."

Diana half-forcibly took the food away from me.

No matter how busy the kitchen was, Diana isolated me from even talking to them.

I don't know why, but it was like she didn't want me to have any contact with them.

I just let it happen and focused on my work. It wasn't my will, but the truth forced me to focus.

"Oh, you can't shoot milk against the wall!"

That damn cow it’s doing it again.

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"You've had a long day, Balkan."

I stretched out at the table after finishing the final cleanup, and Diana handed me a glass of warm milk and sat down across from me.

"⋯Thank you, I'll drink it."

Honestly, just the thought of milk now makes me sick to my stomach, but I gulp it down as best I can without showing it.

-Pow!

I tilted my head as far back as I could, but when I turned my head back to the table, I saw a money bag on the table.

"This is this month's paycheck. We've had more customers since Balkan started working, so I put a little extra in."

"Thank you!"

I hugged the jingling money bag tightly.

"⋯You won't check to make sure you have all the money?"

"Well. Ms. Diana gave it to me."

I didn't bother counting the money in front of her. She wasn't the kind of person to play around with money.

She chatted for a while, looking impressed, then ran her hand through her hair, showing signs of exhaustion.

"Oh, I must have kept you too long, you must be tired, go upstairs and get some rest."

I nodded, thanked her, and went up to my room.

-Boom!

As soon as I entered the room, I counted the money.

A whopping 15 silver coins. Combined with the money I won in the bet, that's 24 silver coins!

I dived into bed with a huge grin on my face.

Tomorrow, I will be one step closer to my elusive goal.