**Chapter 170: 13th Floor (6)**

“Uweeeek!!”

Hitolis bent over urgently and began vomiting.

The desert worm's intestinal walls squirmed, splattering vomit everywhere.

A few drops of the dirty liquid landed on my greaves, but there was no point in complaining about it.

Honestly, I wanted to vomit alongside Hitolis, but the situation didn’t allow me the luxury.

“I didn’t expect to see you here.”

*Chiiiiik!*

Belle muttered as she flipped Perkins’ meat slab with her bare hands.

Despite the grotesque visual, the savory scent and deep aroma filled the air.

Perkins was trash who deserved to die.

No one would argue otherwise.

She was a scum who ruined the morale of a decent exploration party, destroyed the group, and even assaulted the party members.

On top of that, I was in this mess because of her, so hearing of her death brought a strange sense of relief.

‘But paying for one’s sins is one thing.’

Slicing up and grilling a corpse, however, was a different story.

Perhaps she felt my gaze.

“…Ah. This?”

Belle looked at what used to be Perkins.

The girl licked her lips as she gazed at the Maillard-browned Perkins steak on the frying pan.

“I just stumbled upon her. You can easily get offerings inside a desert worm’s stomach, so I’ve used this place a few times before. I got lucky.”

*Sizzle, sizzle—*

I stared at Belle, who casually cooked Perkins’ steak with a nonchalant expression.

The first time I met her, she looked like a fragile corpse.

She had worn nothing but rags, with every bone, including her ribs, protruding through her skin.

But after eating just a piece of rock bread, that walking skeleton had gained a little flesh.

Now, she looked thin but somewhat like a normal girl who’d simply gone hungry for a while.

“It’s done.”

Belle placed the Perkins steak on a cutting board and opened her small mouth wide.

Then, she picked up the still-hot frying pan and shoved it into her mouth.

The broad frying pan slid smoothly into her small mouth, and she gulped it down in one go, a feat impossible unless her stomach contained a subspace.

Drooling, Belle gazed at the Perkins steak.

She reached out to grab the steak with her bare hands, opened her mouth wide, and then—abruptly stopped.

Belle’s gaze landed on our party.

No.

To be precise, it was fixed on me.

Her black eyes reflected the armored warrior in front of her.

“...Hmmmmm…”

Belle alternated between looking at the steak and me with an incredibly conflicted expression. Then, suddenly, she stood up.

And she began walking toward me.

“Hi, hiiiik…!”

“… …”

A terrified Hitolis stumbled back, and Fusilini hurriedly began preparing a binding spell.

*Thud!*

“Do not approach any further.”

Rubia raised her great shield with a wary expression.

“You want to fight?”

“… …”

“Hm… You’ll regret it, though.”

Blocked by the wall that was Rubia, Belle looked up at me, standing in the back.

[**Belle LV.47**]
[**Current blessings and curses possessed by Belle: 1**]

It wasn’t an empty threat.

If all four of us attacked, we could win.

But for some reason, I had a strong gut feeling that we shouldn’t fight her now.

“Rubia.”

Rubia flinched when I called her name.

After spending time together and acting as the party’s leader, I had earned Rubia’s trust to the point that she readily followed my commands.

“Please step back.”

“…Sir Balkan. My instincts are sounding alarms. This woman is dangerous.”

“Yes. I feel the same way.”

I reassured Rubia, whose voice carried a serious tone of concern.

She was a creepy and bizarre girl with a strange presence.

“But still, she doesn’t seem to have any malice.”

Strangely enough, her behavior didn’t appear malicious, as if she had no concept that eating people was wrong.

It was as though she were fundamentally, instinctively warped.

Pure evil embodied in a form.

“…Very well.”

After a moment of deep contemplation, Rubia lowered her shield.

Belle smiled at Rubia’s decision and walked calmly toward me.

Belle wasn’t tall, so she had to look up at me as she approached.

“Here.”

Belle reached her hand out.

“Because you gave me bread.”

In her hand was the Perkins steak, dripping with juices and blood that splattered onto the ground.

“A gift in return.”

As if urging me to take it, she held the piece of meat right in front of my mouth.

I let out a quiet sigh.

There were times when I had no choice but to kill but I had never consumed another human being.

The moment I ate this, I would no longer be human.

I didn’t have any particular moral ideals, but I had my own standards.

‘Could I face my little sister, So-eun, after putting a human in my stomach?’

I immediately shook my head.

That was a line I could not cross.

I grabbed Belle’s wrist, moved her hand, and brought the Perkins steak to her own mouth.

“You eat it.”

“… …”

Belle’s dark, murky eyes blinked, then curled into a soft crescent shape.

“You really are a good person.”

“… …”

“I was wrong before. A man who generously shares his daily bread with others couldn’t have harmed the Great Demon of Gluttony.”

At her sudden words, I momentarily swallowed my breath.

‘The Great Demon of Gluttony?’

The Demon of Gluttony.

The one currently strapped to my back.

The one I had torn apart and reforged into a weapon.

[… …]

Perhaps because she heard Belle’s words, Bunny, which had been silent until now, trembled and released its presence.

Belle, who had been smiling just moments ago, turned her gaze toward Bunny.

“So, there’s just one more thing I’d like to ask.”

“…What is it?”

“Just once. Let me touch your weapon.”

“… …”

“… …”

A strange silence stretched between me and Belle.

My face grew stiffer by the second.

Not long ago, Belle had made the same request and I had clearly refused her back then.

Yet, the fact that she was asking again meant she hadn’t even registered my rejection.

I was about to turn her down once more when—

[You.]

Bunny spoke directly into my mind.

[Don’t you want to become stronger?]

[What?]

[Stronger, with a broader influence. Don’t you want to leave a greater mark on this world?]

Puzzled by Bunny’s sudden words, I asked back, only for Bunny to drop a shocking revelation.

[That creature is my follower.]

[...Follower? Belle is your follower?]

[Tsk. No. The only one bound to me by contract is you. That one is merely a lowly creature that worships me.]

I wanted to argue about being his “contracted follower,” but that could wait.

According to Bunny, Belle was essentially no different from a devotee of the Demon of Gluttony.

[When I first saw her, I wasn’t certain. I was sealed away back then, with no complete memories and only instincts remaining. But now it’s clear. That creature tried to release my seal by continuously offering sacrifices.]

A being who had tried to break the seal of a dormant demon in the labyrinth.

‘She’s insanely dangerous!’

The tension was about to grow stronger, but instead, Bunny smirked.

[What’s this? Are you scared?]

[Nonsense.]

[Hah! Foolish and stupid brat. You’re just a pawn of mine, and yet you bare your fangs at an insignificant creature like that? How ridiculous!]

Bunny burst out laughing and buzzed faintly before whispering in a calmer voice.

[I’ll help you. Make that wretch yours. Use it. Exploit it.]

A chilling sensation ran down my spine at that voice.

[What are you scheming this time?]

The voice had a strangely sly tone, tinged with an ulterior motive.

It was the same tone Bunny used when demanding to eliminate the succubus controlling Ellie and Grumpy.

That day, Bunny had required relentless semen offerings as compensation.

[...Hmm. Nothing in particular. This time, I’m not giving you help but merely advice. However, if today’s decision someday benefits you…]

Gulp.

[...then someday, in a manifested body,]

Bunny swallowed cautiously and made one request.

[...I want to *use* you myself.]

“...Ahhh…”

In a pure white world, Belle blankly shed tears.

As expected, her eyes had not deceived her.

The man who had shared food with her on the 5th floor—Balkan.

The moment she saw the weapon he carried, Belle felt a presence strikingly similar to the one she truly worshipped: the Demon of Gluttony.

Of course, the power of gluttony imbued in that weapon was faint, diluted, and oddly distorted.

If she hadn’t been someone who thought of the Demon of Gluttony 24 hours a day, she would never have noticed it—but Belle had finally achieved this fateful encounter.

The man eventually pointed his axe at her at her words, and the moment Belle touched it, she was pulled into the pure white world.

Now, Belle bowed her head deeply before the being she had longed for and admired.

“Belle, the worshipper of Gluttony, greets the great being.”

The frail-bodied girl bowed before the chained woman.

“That’s enough. Lift your head.”

Bunny replied in a nonchalant voice, but Belle, with an emotional face, nodded several times before raising her head.

Belle had always carried one desire.

Not just Belle—every worshipper of demons lived with their own belief.

Belle sought the destruction of famine, a world where the word *hunger* didn’t exist.

A world where children wouldn’t cry every day from hunger, where no one would steal bread out of desperation and be beaten to death for it.

A world where such children weren’t sold as disposable slaves, used as bait in labyrinths, and ultimately forced into despair.

To create such a world, the power of the being before her was absolutely necessary.

“Are you trapped in this weapon? I will release you from this confinement.”

The restraints clearly wouldn’t be easy to undo, but she could at least try—

“You stupid girl!!!”

A thunderous shout roared.

Clang! Clang!

As Bunny flailed her arms in anger and the sound of chains echoed, Belle shrank again, bowing her head deeply.

“I-I committed a grave sin!!”

“Do you think I’m stuck here because I can’t undo such petty restraints?!”

“Ah, is that not the case…?”

“...N-No! Of course not!”

“I-I apologize!”

As Belle once again bowed her head, a question formed in her mind.

‘Then why is he still here, not properly revived?’

The answer soon spilled from Bunny’s lips.

“This man is special.”

“...Special…”

Belle instinctively agreed and nodded at those words.

She recalled the stone bread Balkan had given her.

It was hard and cold, yet it was the first act of kindness the young girl had ever received.

“This one will surely be useful. He is worth my time and attention.”

Ah, Belle gasped softly.

There was no way a being as lofty as the Demon of Gluttony could share the same perspective as a lowly creature like herself.

The Demon of Gluttony must have seen something valuable in Balkan, something worth staying close for.

Finally, Belle understood.

“Everything is going according to my plan. That foolish brat is no different. The time is near.”

Bunny truly believed this, smiling with an arrogant and majestic air.

“Then, what should I do in the meantime…?”

“Give him a chance to broaden his experience. Oh, and keep an eye on him from afar. Not too far, but appropriately close.”

“Yes!”

It was a vague command, but Belle somehow understood it perfectly and nodded.

The course was set, and Bunny casually nodded to expel Belle from the mental world before letting out a sigh.

“Phew…”

Thump, thump.

For some reason, her heart beat violently as she muttered to the one outside, the one who would hear her voice.

“...Keep your promise, you foolish brat.”