**Chapter 178: Safe? Zone (7)**

Balkan looked at the being staring down at him from beyond the helmet.

[Bio LV.39]

A human woman with a level slightly lower than Nate Elin, the Paladin of the Temple.

Standing at around mid-180 cm, her well-built muscles and the sword sheath at her waist revealed her skill as a seasoned swordsman.

Just as Balkan looked up at her, Bio looked down at him as well.

Bio gazed at the foolish intruders with a face full of displeasure.

A centaur, a woman with an eyepatch, and a man lightly holding a massive axe in one hand.

The sudden destruction of the wall and the murders that followed instantly froze the air in the hall, spreading confusion, tension, and fear among those who witnessed the scene.

All the attention and wariness of those in the clan building turned toward him, and no one dared to move hastily.

The man, who had instantly dominated someone else's territory with his presence, spoke to the territory's owner.

"You have two choices."

As soon as Bio heard his words, she let out a snort.

"First. You quietly dispel the lethal poison magic cast on my party member."

It was a proposal so foolish and arrogant it was almost laughable.

He spoke as though he held the initiative in this situation.

"You dumb male. You stupid, pathetic, ignorant bastard. Do you really think that makes any sense?"

Thus, Bio sneered at him with a disdainful gaze and spat her words.

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Killing those who killed my clan members is nothing more than the natural order of the world."

“Uoooooooh!”

At Bio's words, the members of the "Back Alley Domination" clan shouted with relieved expressions.

They began to raise their fists, chanting Bio’s name repeatedly.

Though the clan was crumbling externally, its inner unity only grew stronger.

Even in the face of external attacks and losses, the belief that someone would avenge their death someday turned those who followed into loyal dogs willing to lay down their lives.

Bio had slaughtered the party members of Jubeel to prove that, and the clan members’ faith in her peaked.

The man who had just severed another member's neck would undoubtedly meet the same end.

Such excessive trust even led their minds to rely on her entirely.

To them, anyone who opposed Bio became their enemy.

The clan members’ gazes at Balkan grew harsher.

"A nobody comes out of nowhere and demands I dispel my magic? Ha! No matter how much we've fallen, have we become so insignificant?"

Humiliation.

Until recently, the clan leader of a once-noteworthy group in the back alleys was now being treated as inferior by a complete nobody.

It was enough to ignite fury.

*Screech–*

As Bio drew her sword from her waist and spoke, the clan members surrounding Balkan and his party readied their weapons.

*Clang.*

Standing tall like a general commanding an army, Bio pointed her blade at Balkan.

"Engrave your own slave number on that filthy body of yours. Then, crawl to me on all fours, bow your head, and swear allegiance at my feet."

There is no more enjoyable amusement than watching a fool who dares to invade, kneel and beg for his life under the overwhelming disparity of power.

At least he looks competent. Seeing his face twisted in humiliation beneath that helmet will be quite satisfying.

"If you do that, I'll spare your life."

*Screech!*

With a vile grin, Bio leveled her sword as the clan members prepared their cold steel.

"Rise, O wraiths."

Amel Drexia, seated behind Balkan, quietly muttered.

*Crack! Creak!*

Seven skeletons crawled out from the ground.

Two of them clung to the centaur, forming bone armor on its body.

*Snort!*

The eerie noise of the armored centaur heightened the tension among those present.

"Amel Drexia. Get out of here. If you turn back now, I’ll let you live."

*Sigh–*

Amel Drexia exhaled smoke from her cigarette.

As the cigarette burned down and dropped to the ground, the undead ignited flaming swords in their skeletal hands.

"Sorry, but I’ve made a deal. These small fry… your clan members, are ours to handle."

"Tch! Then so be it. Foolish woman, you’re worth less than that scum over there, so you can quietly die!!"

“Kill the women and capture the man!!!”

“Slay the intruders!!!”

At Bio's command, the enraged clan members roared and charged.

"I see."

As countless weapons flew toward him in an instant, Balkan, who had been focused on Bio, muttered.

"That must be the second choice."

*Prrrrrr!*

With a snorting sound, the centaur lifted its forelegs and began to soar through the air.

In a single stride, it leaped over the heads of numerous clan members.

With the second step, it soared into the air.

By the third step, it had reached Bio's toes.

That was the limit of the centaur. But then—

*Thud!*

Balkan, who had been standing on the centaur’s back, stepped off the horse’s back and leapt even higher.

As the centaur descended, Balkan, towering in the air, brought the blade of his axe to Bio’s face.

“Fight and die, then undo the magic you cast!”

*Clang!*

The metallic sound signaling the start of the battle reverberated.

*Crackling!*

When the sharp axe was blocked by the back of Bio’s sword, sparks flew.

Before the yellow and crimson sparks even touched the ground, Bio, who had deflected Balkan’s downward strike, swiftly turned her body.

She intended to create distance with a core-powered back kick.

*Thud!*

Her kick landed squarely on his abdomen.

Although her attack succeeded, Bio's expression hardened instead.

*A wall?*

It felt as though she had kicked a massive fortress wall dividing the ground.

The solid wall didn’t budge against the mere kick of a woman. Instead, she was pushed back by the recoil of her own strike.

*What kind of body is this…? He’s not just someone who skipped basic magic training to build physical strength!*

It was an overwhelmingly simple yet astonishing difference in physical capability.

Before she could even think something like, *What kind of man has a body like this…*Bio quickly made her judgment.

*I can’t beat him with strength.*

Her intuition told her that a straightforward power struggle would only lead to her defeat. She would need to rely on skill.

*Thud!*

Using his abdomen as a springboard, Bio pushed off and widened the distance.

But Balkan wasn’t the type to simply stand and watch.

*Grab!*

“Ugh…!”

He immediately extended his thick arm and grabbed Bio’s slender ankle with one hand.

Despite the excruciating pain in her ankle, as though it were about to break, Bio drew a faint curve at the corner of her lips.

*This is my chance!*

*Woom!*

Her sword began to emit a green magical aura.

It was a lethal poison magic—a form of black magic that could slowly kill its victim once inflicted, one of the worst types of spells.

The deadly poison, powerful enough to weaken even a desert worm of the 13th floor or a wyvern of the 16th, coated her blade.

With the green aura of the lethal poison enveloping her sword, Bio swung her weapon, a deadly tool that must not land even a single strike.

*Slash!*

The moment she swung the sword, Bio experienced several sensations at once.

First, the feeling of slicing through flesh.

Her poison-clad sword cut cleanly through skin and muscle, exposing the white bone beneath.

Although it wasn’t a fatal wound, the poison had already invaded his body through the cut. Victory seemed assured.

Yes.

That was supposed to be the foregone conclusion.

But a different sensation kept clouding her perception.

*Crunch!*

“Argh!!!”

Even though the muscles in his forearm were split in two, Balkan gripped her ankle with even greater force, utterly crushing it.

The immense power smashing her ankle sent Bio’s mind into disarray from the sheer pain.

It was absurd.

Her poison was lethal, designed to invade the body and inflict unimaginable agony in an instant!

The cow beastman she had struck the night before would have rolled her eyes back and collapsed on the spot if not for the priest's countless miracles.

*How…?*

How was this man still standing tall, crushing her ankle?

*Crunch.*

Grinding his teeth, Balkan, frothing green venom at the mouth, sneered viciously as he glared at her.

“Pain can be endured, you stupid wench.”

Even if poisoned, one need only fight with the determination to kill the caster.

“And if I kill the caster, the poison is undone. That means I was never poisoned to begin with.”

“What…nonsense…”

Bio, unable to finish her sentence, stared blankly at Balkan.

He raised his mangled arm, the bone protruding visibly, and lifted Bio’s limp body along with it.

Then—

*Crash!*

Bio’s body smashed into the floor, shattering it.

*Boom! Crash!*

The sound was so alarming that the clan members fighting below turned their gazes to the upper floor.

Those who had watched Bio’s overwhelming presence from the sidelines had no doubt she would win.

To them, it was only a matter of time before their clan leader triumphed.

But—

The scene before them was far from what they had imagined.

*Crash! Boom!*

After five fierce impacts, all sound in the hall ceased.

No one dared to speak.

Thirty seconds and not even five exchanges of blows had passed before the battle concluded.

And the one left standing was only one person.

In the suffocating silence, Balkan, drenched in blood, threw Bio’s shattered ankle to the ground and muttered:

“Your clan leader is weak.”