**Chapter 197: 16th Floor (4)**

The taste of Idelbert’s stew wasn't good even as a polite comment, but at least it filled my stomach.

I swung my axe, consuming the driving force to endure today.

-Slash! Chop!

Walking northward, I cleared the waist-high weeds with my artifact hand axe.

I knew the portal's location, but getting there was the challenge.

I was in a dense jungle environment.

The lukewarm temperature and humidity naturally caused discomfort, and the weeds sticking to my sweat-soaked body occasionally cut my skin.

After increasing my wisdom stat, controlling various types of magic became easier, so I could overcome the unpleasant temperature by regulating my body temperature with cold magic.

While the temperature problem was solved, the waist-high weeds still made the exploration slow and troublesome.

-Rustle, rustling.

Moreover, even without wind, sometimes the bushes would shake and make alien sounds and when that happens, nine times out of ten.

"Hisssssss!"

A monster appears.

"It's a Twin-headed Cobra! Be careful, it's a monster with excellent regeneration and deadly poison!"

Idelbert, who had somehow climbed up a nearby tree, looked down at me and informed me of the situation.

Five twin-headed cobras sprang out from the bushes.

Snakes with bodies as thick as Balkan's thigh, each with two heads, slithered in an S-shape while gradually approaching threateningly.

There were five bodies on the ground but ten heads, quite a grotesque visual.

Reflexively tensing my eyes, a targeting reticle appeared in my vision like a sniper rifle scope.

-Click!

It locked onto the left head of a twin-headed cobra.

The weakness detection magic I learned from Idelbert's spellbook.

Since it's a snake with two heads, cutting off both would naturally kill it, but knowing which side is particularly vulnerable gives me more room to maneuver.

"Hup!"

-Swoosh!

Lowering my body almost to the ground, I spun once while widely swinging the giant axe Bunny.

All the surrounding vegetation was torn away, instantly removing any hiding spots for the twin-headed cobras.

-Slash!

I felt something slightly harder than vegetation being cut at my fingertips.

"Hisssssss!"

Luckily, I cut off one of the twin-headed cobra's heads. Not the left head but the right one.

Even after losing one head and draining blood, it continued to move, writhing its body while maintaining balance with the left head.

-Bulge. Bulge.

That wasn't the end.

The severed right head started to slowly regenerate and grow back.

There was no reason to just watch this.

I immediately rushed in and swung my axe at the twin-headed cobra with only one head remaining.

"Hisssssss!"

The twin-headed cobra tried to dodge it with quick reflexes but.

-Whoosh!

Unfortunately, my body was faster at adjusting the strike point.

-Slash!

The artifact hand axe made of relic alloy shattered the cobra's scale and cut off its left head.

Leaving the axe stuck in the ground covered in green venom, I turned my body and swung the giant axe in my other hand.

-Slash!

The heads of two twin-headed cobras trying to sink their fangs into my back were separated from their bodies.

I looked at the four snake heads that fell to the ground with a thud.

Despite using the weakness detection magic, I ended up cutting off both heads simultaneously.

The twin-headed cobras whose necks were cut simultaneously no longer regenerated and lay their thick bodies limply on the ground.

-Slither! Slither!

Seeming to realize the situation wasn't easy, the remaining two twin-headed cobras turned their bodies and began fleeing hastily.

There was no need to chase them.

-Chomp!

"Hisssssss!"

"Growl!"

Because a pack of Bone Jaguars passing by at lightning speed pierced and snatched the twin-headed cobras' bodies with their bone teeth attached to their jaws.

-Chomp! Crunch!

"Hisss..."

The two twin-headed cobras screamed as they were torn apart by the four Bone Jaguars.

-Grind.

A Bone Jaguar tearing off the twin-headed cobra's head and ripping apart its flesh looked at me.

-Click.

When our eyes met, the weakness detection magic's reticle pointed to the Bone Jaguar's bone teeth worn like a helmet and its right front leg.

"What are you looking at, you bastards?"

"Grrrr-"

When I took a battle stance pointing my giant axe, the Bone Jaguar pack growled.

After hesitating for a moment, they soon bared their sharp teeth at me as well.

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"The 16th floor has many monsters."

-Slash!

After cutting off the last remaining Bone Jaguar's windpipe, I asked while wiping the axe blade covered in mixed red blood and green venom with leather.

"It'll be like this until you reach the 20th floor. There are more types of monsters in one floor than in previous floors. Especially the 16th and 17th floors."

Wyvern. Twin-headed Cobra. Bone Jaguar.

I had already encountered three types of monsters in just one day.

I could definitely feel that the variety of monsters had increased.

While maintaining my weapons, I reviewed the recent battle.

The weakness detection magic worked efficiently and I didn't tire easily even after casting it.

My overall form in using magic techniques seemed to have improved.

'Must be because I increased my wisdom stat.'

Idelbert, who had been watching Balkan catch his breath while sitting on the Bone Jaguar corpse, asked.

"Are you tired?"

He would have been, if he were an ordinary explorer.

The 16th floor is a place where ordinary explorers wouldn't dare enter alone.

Her disciple had already fought several battles there alone, without a mage's support magic, a priest's healing, a tank's protection, or a swordsman's follow-up strikes.

He had to face stronger monsters by investing more concentration, stamina, and strength in each battle.

The quality of experience gained was different from when profit-seeking explorers faced weak monsters in groups.

As a result, Balkan grew more significantly with each battle.

By the recent battle, he handled multiple enemies as if accustomed to fighting alone, and cleanly responded to ambushes as if he had eyes on his back.

Who would think this man had been an explorer for less than a year after seeing that battle?

Idelbert laughed inwardly.

The man who declared he would become strong, essentially announcing he would destroy her virginity, was growing rapidly just as she had in the past.

"Ha. No way."

While Idelbert was thinking this, Balkan snorted and stood up abruptly.

He had taken her words as a provocation.

'What do you take my stamina for?'

There was still plenty of energy left.

Just as he was about to dust off his knees and use his axe to support himself to stand up to walk towards the portal again.

[Sniff sniff.]

Bunny, who had been silent for a while, made a strange sound.

[...I smell something delicious]

[What?]

[I smell magi. It's nearby.]

The smell of magi? Does that mean there's a monster possessed by magi nearby?

Balkan closed his eyes and broadened his perception range for more precise detection.

[I don't feel anything speci-]

-flesh, grr, mast...

-Flinch.

He opened his eyes wide at the voice that suddenly pierced his mind.

Balkan blankly stared at where he felt the voice coming from.

Then he noticed the Bone Jaguar corpse lying limp on the ground.

After clearing away the interfering corpse, he saw the damp mud with cut weeds above.

-Thud. Thud thud.

"...Disciple. What are you doing?"

Idelbert cast a puzzled look at Balkan who suddenly started hitting the ground with his axe.

"I heard a strange voice from down here."

"A strange voice? This is just ground..."

Idelbert's tail, which had been relaxed as she spoke nonchalantly, suddenly stood straight.

"...Oh my."

Her consistently composed face stiffened slightly.

Her gaze also turned to the ground where he had been hitting with his axe.

"Step aside for a moment."

-Slash!

When Idelbert swung her fist toward the ground, the damp mud and weeds splattered everywhere with a thunderous sound.

Below where the mud had burst away, a stone plate with a hole in the shape of a fist became visible.

"...What is this?"

"It's a relic warehouse."

"Huhhhk...!"

Balkan hastily swallowed his breath.

He first checked if anyone nearby had heard. No one was there.

Finding a relic warehouse felt like winning the lottery.

Despite spending quite a long time in the Labyrinth, he had never found a relic warehouse, the highlight of the Labyrinth where you could definitely obtain relics.

Finding the entrance to a relic warehouse depends purely on individual luck.

Moreover, they say most relic warehouses in the upper floors have been cleared and disappeared.

Despite his pounding heart, he swallowed and calmed his breathing.

Let's think calmly.

'I don't know the detailed contents about relic warehouses.'

They say certain relic warehouses have rules that only apply there.

His steps hesitated slightly as he was about to enter without any knowledge of such things.

Moreover, the strange voice from earlier, whether human or monster, also worried him.

[Are you sure the smell of magi is coming from here?]

[Certainly. Hey! Don't underestimate my sense of smell.]

Bunny's claim about sensing magi couldn't be ignored either.

Just as he was wondering if he should enter now.

-Slash!

Turning his eyes at the sound of something breaking, he saw Idelbert, who had swung her fist again to widen the passage, entering without hesitation and beckoning to Balkan.

"Follow me, disciple."

Balkan nodded.

Come to think of it, there was no need to worry.

Master, who is more reliable than anyone in terms of pure strength, is by my side.

Honestly, if not now, when would I ever get to enter?

Even the cheapest relics cost dozens of gold coins...

-Gulp.

His mouth watered completely.