**Chapter 212: A man who smells like her sister's vaginal juice (3)**

"Then we'll go get our blessings checked. Are you sure you don't want to come with us?"

"No. I'll have to stop by again later anyway. Let's settle everything at the Union in two days."

"Hehe. Alright!"

Lammel left, saying he needed to rest now.

Rubia, Hitolis, and Grumpy, who had received blessings, headed together into the main temple building.

"Master. I'll go straight to the library after getting checked."

"...Right."

Grumpy smiled with a grin.

Balkan could only smile bitterly at her expression that showed excitement about what kind of blessing she might have received.

"My lord. Where are you going now?"

"The library. There's something I need to look up."

Balkan answered Belle, who was scurrying behind him, and turned his steps toward the library attached to the corner of the temple, not the main building.

Since he had the status window, he didn't need to get his blessing checked unless he was meeting Serif.

'Still, I should stop by once before the next labyrinth run.'

The Scar of Patience that Serif had engraved.

That scar, which reduced sexual desire to almost zero, had been quite helpful in suppressing the sexual desire of the succubus' curse during this labyrinth run.

Although the scar was shattered by the merciless forced milking of her elder sister Idelbert, and he ended up having relations with two women afterward...it was clear that it had been tremendously helpful until it broke.

Since he had received so much, he planned to prepare a small gift for Serif to show his gratitude, though modest.

But right now, he was empty-handed.

With no suitable gift or purpose, his aimless steps naturally headed toward the temple library.

'Study. I should do that.'

-You need to learn about mythology before exploring the labyrinth. Your head is empty!

The memory of the Demon of Sloth mocking him for having an empty head was still vivid. How could he stay still after hearing such words?

This desire to learn wasn't just due to defiance and competitiveness.

The woman wrapped in light he saw at the fountain, the fragment of the Earth Mother Goddess.

For some reason, it made him recall memories of his sister every time he saw it...he wanted to know more about this mysterious being.

And there was no way the temple library, which worshipped the Earth Mother Goddess as the only deity, wouldn't have books related to the Earth Mother.

Having reached the front of the library, Balkan spoke to Belle who had been following closely behind him.

"You have to be quiet in there, okay?"

"Do I need to be quiet?"

"Yes. That's the rule in libraries. Even when talking, keep it low - you can't be loud."

After taking Belle in as a slave, Balkan had frequent conversations with her and could learn more stories from her.

Not just about the past, but also how she became a worshipper of Gluttony.

Moreover, while traveling and talking together in the labyrinth, he realized that Belle lacked quite a bit of common sense about the surface world.

She was an orphan who grew up in back alleys from childhood.

Due to her past of being sold as a slave and used as monster bait, she had practically grown up in the labyrinth.

Perhaps because of this, her speech and behavior were awkward, and sometimes she would become rough like a criminal who had spent years in back alleys...but she was just a girl who had barely become an adult.

Although Belle wasn't someone weak enough to need protection, her fragile and precarious heart needed a warm touch and care.

There was a need to teach her how to use the power of a demon worshipper more beneficially, rather than wastefully.

In this disgusting, cruel, and corrupted world, the temple was one of the few organizations that pursued definite goodness and righteousness.

The temple library was quite a good choice as a place to untangle Belle's complicated heart and fill it with mental nourishment.

If they could find good books, it could become an opportunity for what you might call enlightenment.

"I understand. I must be quiet in the library. Belle understood."

"Good. Then let's go."

Balkan smiled gently while patting Belle's head, then opened the door to the temple library.

-Click.

The moment he opened the door, the library's unique paper smell and quiet, solemn atmosphere greeted him.

"Ah. You've finally come?"

After taking just a few steps into the library, the temple library's librarian addressed him.

"...Huh? Me?"

The librarian who had been smiling kindly saw Balkan's expression of not knowing why he was called, and answered with a vein popping on her forehead.

"Since it's been quite a while since you borrowed a book and failed to return it...hoho."

Balkan belatedly realized his mistake.

There was a book he had borrowed from the temple library before but hadn't read because he was busy with various things and found it bothersome.

Certainly, it was a fairy tale book titled [Earth Mother Goddess and the Mythology of Light].

Thinking about it now, it had something in common with the content he was looking for.

"Haha...I'll pay the late fee first. I was busy with various explorer work. I'm sorry."

"These things happen. The late fee is 10 silver coins."

Books were definitely luxury items in this world. The accumulated late fee was quite expensive. When borrowing, it was only half a silver coin.

Although he could readily pay such an amount now, it was still money he didn't have to spend if he had been more careful. A slight feeling of depression came over him.

"How dare you glare at my lord over something like a late fee...!"

Belle muttered in a very small voice as Balkan had warned, trying to release a fierce energy. Balkan hurriedly stopped her.

"My lord!"

"Belle. This is my fault. I broke the promise first by returning the book late. When you've done something wrong, you shouldn't get angry in return."

"...That priestess is weak. She would die with just one gesture from my lord."

"You shouldn't resolve right and wrong with force alone."

"......"

Belle didn't answer and Balkan continued speaking, for her sake as well.

"Belle. Let's make a hypothesis. Say you bought bread from me with money. Paying a fair price."

"......"

"But suddenly I hit you and took the bread back. How do you think you would feel?"

"If my lord did that...I would think there was no choice."

"But you'd still feel sad and wronged, right? Because even though you paid the price, it was forcibly taken away."

"...I think so."

"It's similar."

"......"

Though unsure if it was the right analogy, Belle seemed to understand when he used food as an example, nodding her head.

Balkan patted Belle's head again, then turned his attention to the librarian while rummaging through his pocket.

"I'd like to borrow the book for another month. Of course, I'll pay the late fee."

"...I have a son about that age too. A son who doesn't know the ways of the world and doesn't listen to his parents... \*sigh\*. You must have it tough. I'll reduce the late fee a bit. I'll pray that you can build up more extensive knowledge at the temple library."

Did she mistake Balkan and Belle's relationship for parent and child? Or was it parental emotion spilling out?

Maybe it was both. The librarian who had seemed determined to collect the overdue fee now smiled with a thoroughly gentle face.

Balkan paid five silver coins as the drastically discounted late fee and asked about the section with books related to the Earth Mother Goddess.

"It's in the last row of the library."

"Thank you for letting me know."

"No need for thanks. Take care, Explorer."

Balkan bowed to the librarian and continued browsing the library with Belle.

The temple library was quite spacious. The place filled with the smell of paper was fun to walk through. It felt like knowledge was increasing just by walking.

"Is there a book you want to read?"

"Ah, um...then I, I would like to read this."

Belle, who had been glancing around nervously for a while, carefully pointed to a book.

[100 Easy and Delicious Recipes Even a Baby Can Make]

A cookbook.

In this world where books were luxury items, it was quite a rare book, and it was a choice very fitting for Belle.

"I, I can't read, so I don't understand the content well. But the pictures look delicious...!"

Balkan looked at the page Belle had opened.

Brief and easy-to-understand explanations for making the dishes, and large photographs showing the cooking process.

As the title suggested, the recipes looked so simple and easy that even a baby could follow them, but the dishes looked quite appetizing. Enough to make one's mouth water at first sight.

'...What's this?'

But the moment he saw those photos, he felt a strange sense of discomfort.

The scenery visible around the food photos was oddly familiar.

A place where he had been for a very long time, a place he had frequented almost daily.

A place full of memories that had been with him since the beginning of his time in this world...

The place in the photos was very similar to Diana's kitchen.

Balkan, momentarily dazed, looked at the book's author as if in a trance.

[Author: Diana]

Sure enough, Diana's name was written there.

Though it was just a name without a surname, that Diana was surely the Diana that Balkan remembered.

The publication date was almost six years ago. Quite old.

"...Do you like this book?"

"Yes. The food in the book gives me a warm feeling. It's hard to explain exactly...but it feels similar to the bread my lord gave me before."

Balkan smiled warmly hearing those words.

It was Diana indeed. To be able to soothe the heart of a Gluttony worshipper with just the warmth captured in a photograph.

Among those who liked Diana's cooking and could feel its warm comfort, there were no natural-born evil people.

If there were any who didn't, they would be beasts without blood or tears.

Belle had been instinctively moved by Diana's cooking.

It was the environment that was wrong, but she was a child with a human heart. Even though she was raised like a beast, she could grow up properly.

"Alright. Let's borrow this one."

"Thank you, my lord! If I get the chance, I'll make such warm dishes for you."

Balkan patted Belle's head again as she whispered her reply. Each time he did so, Belle smiled as if pleased.

Belle had no money. Not just money, she had nothing that could be called property. He would have to pay the rental fee for her, but seeing how happy she was, a few silver coins didn't feel wasteful.

'Besides, it's Diana's book too.'

Since it was written by his benefactor, he didn't mind.

However, it felt strangely interesting. To think that Diana had written a cookbook.

Putting aside these different impressions, he continued walking.

[Earth Mother Goddess and the Mythology of Light] was a thin fairy tale book. He had chosen it because he didn't like reading dense text.

With similar thinking, he planned to find and borrow other books related to the Earth Mother Goddess.

After walking for a while, he headed to the place the librarian had mentioned.

Countless bookshelves stretched while thick and intimidating books packed tightly in shelves that seemed to reach endlessly toward the sky.

"Ugh, shi..."

His head spontaneously became dizzy. He was terrible at studying, and just looking at the books made him feel faint. It seemed utterly daunting.

Still, he carefully took one step forward.

Since even a thousand-mile journey begins with a single step, first start with the thinnest and simplest fairy tale book...

"Ah!"

Just then, someone shouted loudly. A voice so loud it made his body tremble.

-Crash!

Following that came the sound of books falling in cascades.

Wondering what kind of person would make such a loud noise in a library, he turned his head.

"B-Balkan...?!"

There was Serif Adeline, staring blankly at him with round eyes.

The saint of the Earth Mother Goddess sect and Idelbert’s younger sister, a white cat beastkin.

"H-how are you in a place like this...! Heheh. What a c-coincidence...?"

-Swish. Swish.

Beyond her white cat tail swishing quickly as if excited, her guard paladin Nate Elin and a dog beastkin priestess with an unfamiliar face could be seen.

However, something was strange.

"Ugh, uh, uhh...!"

The dog beastkin priestess's face turned pale the moment she saw Balkan.

"Y-you are...! From that time...!"

"...That time?"

Balkan tilted his head looking at the priestess who seemed to recognize him.

It was natural. She was a priestess he was seeing for the first time...no, she seemed somewhat familiar...he couldn't remember well.

But Swalco, the dog beastkin priestess who had returned from the 15th floor a few days ago, knew the helmeted man before her eyes.

'The man who came to the holy fountain with a leashed female and all sorts of adult toys...!'

Swalco clearly remembered Balkan's appearance and the terrible acts of sacred desecration he had committed.

Just as Swalco was about to hurriedly open her mouth.

Whoosh—!

"Mmph!"

An unbelievable smell was detected by the sensitive canine beastkin's nose.

"Hueeeeeh...?"

The smell attached to a person's body conveyed much more information than expected.

This tendency was especially strong in the case of beastkin, and Swalco prided herself on having one of the best senses of smell among canine beastkin.

That's why Swalco was even more shocked.

This was.

This damp smell of mating between an in-heat female and male, thick with their mingled scents...

It was definitely not something that could be artificially created.

And, Swalco wasn't the only one in this place who could detect such a smell.

-Perk, perk.

-Sniff. Sniff sniff.

"Ungh...?"

Serif raised her white cat ears stiffly while smelling the scent wafting from around Balkan.

Why was it?

From him whom she hadn't seen in a while, came the smell of her detestable sister.

And very strongly at that.