**Chapter 221: It's Been a While (1)**

"What nonsense are you talking about, Lilith? Eating this goddamn city."

Lilith turned her eyes at the growling voice.

The red-haired Minotaur was raising her voice with a look that seemed ready to devour.

It was Ain Gott, a fanatic who worshiped the demon of wrath and a Minotaur.

"It's nothing. Shall we continue?"

Lilith waved her hand and looked around at those present.

Seven chairs were placed at a round table placed in the middle of a dark, enclosed room, where those who each worshipped seven demons had gathered.

It was a regular meeting held once every few years, though they were lumped together as demon worshippers, each had different purposes and beliefs in their hearts.

Although they had no sense of community spirit, it was a time created for those who shared only one common interest - the resurrection of demons - to exchange materials or information.

That was the regular meeting.

'Well. The meetings have never really gone well anyway.'

Lilith clicked her tongue inwardly as she looked at those seated in the chairs.

Ain Gott, the psychopathic fanatic Minotaur who worshiped the demon of wrath.

Karelos, the chameleon beastkin who worshiped the demon of envy.

Ignorion, the peacock beastkin who worshipped the demon of pride.

Sleeve, the human woman who worshiped the demon of sloth.

And finally, herself, the succubus who worshipped the demon of lust.

She was tired of seeing the same faces that never changed.

There were two empty chairs at the round table.

The seat of greed was always empty so she didn't mind, but there was some discussion about the other seat.

"The gluttony that was sealed on the 5th floor disappeared without a trace."

"How long ago was that...? I thought the gluttony worshippers had destroyed themselves by eating each other...Perhaps some survived and continued offering tributes..."

Speculative conversations about gluttony went back and forth between Gott and Karelos, but few knew the inside story.

Even if they did know, there was no reason to mention it.

There was no reason to waste truly important information on such idle chat.

"A few weeks ago, one of my laboratories on the 16th floor was completely destroyed."

In such a situation, it was an unexpected decision for Sleeve to calmly reveal her own damage.

"Your laboratory?"

"Look at this."

-Thud.

In response to Gott’s question, Sleeve threw a test tube the size of a middle finger onto the center of the round table.

Whoooshㅡ

Faint light leaked into the space that had been shrouded in darkness.

Inside the test tube standing straight in the center of the round table was a remnant of holy power, so faint it was barely visible.

"When I was away and came back to find my precious chimera dead, I investigated and found this. Now high-ranking explorers from the Explorers' Union are occupying it and searching inside, so I can't investigate further."

"Kuk..."

"Shit. What the..."

"......"

Different reactions sprang from the mouths of the demon worshippers who saw it.

Some turned away with contempt, some were blankly amazed, and some spat out curses.

Though it was a tiny amount befitting the term 'remnant,' it contained light so pure it was among the most remarkable holy power they had ever seen.

Lilith remained quietly silent.

'That time, that...'

Lilith had felt this holy power before.

The holy power mixed in with the mark of subjugation that the high-ranking incubus had instinctively engraved.

Though it was an even more brilliant light than then, it was clearly the holy power of the same being.

"What the hell is that holy power! How can even just the remnants have such intense light?"

"A saint. It must be a saint...Such bright and intense holy power could only be from a temple saint...Damn, if only that bitch Idelbert hadn't killed the high priests in the past, the saint would have been on my side long ago..."

The wrath worshipper Gott raised her voice and the envy worshipper Karelos muttered as if enchanted.

"It's not the saint. She didn't enter the labyrinth then."

The round table was enveloped in silence at Sleeve's definitive answer.

What those words meant was only one thing.

"Another person with saint-level high-purity holy power has appeared."

The reactions came immediately.

"Let's kill them."

"We should bring them to our side."

Gott and Lilith's statements clashed.

Gott immediately raised her voice and shouted.

"Are you out of your mind, Lilith! Has stuffing dildos in your holes every day done something to your head? We can't let someone with that much holy power live again! The 16th floor means they're not a monster yet. We need to cut off the bud now!"

"If someone with that level of holy power becomes one of us, they would be a great force."

"One of us? What bullshit. Since when have you cared about other demon worshippers?"

"Hmm. Starting now?"

"You fucking bitch!"

-Bang!

The Minotaur's fist roughly shook the round table and the marble round table shattered as easily as glass.

"I think we should brainwash them first...If it works, we can use them well...If not, well, we can just kill them..."

"I agree. Above all, even without the holy power, they were strong enough to kill my chimera. The chances of them being male are low, but if they are male, I'd like to use them for monster breeding."

When Karelos and Sleeve threw in their opinions to capture them first, the scale tipped towards keeping them alive rather than killing them.

Gott glared at Ignorion, the pride worshipper but she maintained her silence.

At that, Gott shouted in rage.

"Fuck! You bastards have lost your minds. Instead of thinking about somehow resurrecting the Great Ones and exterminating the bloodline of those abominable people who called the hero that imprisoned the Great Ones in that terrible underground prison of Arlonia Kingdom, you're just obsessed with fulfilling your own desires!!!!"

"Unlike some fanatics living somewhere, I'm not such a zealous worshipper. I'm not interested in mythological grudges. Demons are just beings to fulfill wishes...Like a magic lamp."

When Sleeve mocked him in a slow tone, veins bulged on Gott's forehead again.

Few among them believed in demons through faith and devotion.

They just had wishes and hopes as intense as that.

"But...Is there any way to find them?"

When Ignorion opened her mouth, silence fell.

The gazes of others, including Gott, turned to Sleeve.

"All I have is that remnant. There are no other hints."

The only information they had was that they were an explorer capable of crossing the 16th floor.

Since holy power rarely manifests externally except when performing miracles.

While others felt at a loss having to identify someone unknown without even basic information like gender or age, Lilith smiled deeply inside.

The figure was reflected in the eyes of the sparrow familiar perched on the window.

'But the problem is...'

-Morning is here, Balkan.

The woman who was sticking close by his side, guarding him.

The guard of the inn's demon was too solid.

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It was a quiet afternoon as we were sitting around the table for a late breakfast.

First came Diana's soup that they were having after a really long time, followed by a rich salad along with crispy pork cutlet and a demi-glace sauce set with excellent deep flavor.

"Wow..."

Belle holding forks in both hands let out a pure and sincere exclamation.

A small flag was specially stuck in her pork cutlet.

"Looks delicious, right?"

"Yes. \*slurp\* My lord. In my life, such a luxurious meal...\*gulp\* is a first. Can I really eat all of this?"

Diana also smiled brightly at Belle's pure reaction.

He had told Diana the truth about Belle just as he had with Serif but Diana took it rather nonchalantly.

Since Diana was also an explorer who had been through thick and thin, she seemed to just accept it.

Rather, she seemed more surprised when she found out that Denshi was connected to the Puppeteer.

"Of course. There's plenty in the kitchen, so just say if you want more."

"Thank you. Pork cutlet sister. People who give food are good people. You are a kind and pretty pork cutlet sister."

"S-sister?......huhu...This child..."

Diana's eyes looking at Belle softened even more. Her slightly trembling lips couldn't hide her smile and drew an arc.

"It's probably just ordinary soup though...hmm..."

Denshi, who looked at the soup as if it were ordinary, took a spoonful and soon focused only on eating the soup without a word.

Eventually, after drinking the soup with the bowl and all, she let out a hot sigh.

"Is this how you captivated Master...? Master, you fell for this, right? This soup?"

"It's not like I have no stake in it."

Probably about a quarter. Maybe even more than that.

"Denshi, just say if you want more too. There's plenty."

"...Then I'll have another bowl please."

Denshi politely held out her bowl to Diana.

Perhaps because they had seen each other's embarrassing sides last night, their relationship seemed to have changed subtly.

Should I say the strange nerve war and power struggle had decreased?

Or should I say their eyes looking at each other had become somewhat gentler?

At any rate, it was a welcome thing, so I cut the pork cutlet with relief and put it in my mouth.

It was a proper pork cutlet that was crispy while keeping the meat juice alive and a smile naturally drew on my face.

Even eating similar dishes, there was a big difference between Diana's food and others' food, so much so that I wondered if she had some kind of cooking blessing.

After finishing a truly satisfying meal, we had tea time.

"...Denshi."

"...Yes."

Diana, who took a sip of coffee, called Denshi's name. I could see Denshi's shoulders trembling slightly as if tense.

As if having made up her mind, Diana's mouth opened.

"Do you believe in Balkan?"

Denshi's purple pupils were reflected in Diana's narrowly opened amber pupils.

Diana believed that a person's essence was contained in their pupils.

Because eyes contain a person's mindset, just by looking at the eyes, you can vaguely guess whether that person has malice or goodwill.

"Can you completely trust him and swing your sword for him? Can you sacrifice yourself to protect him?"

Denshi, who was a slave, would be by my side more often than Diana who had retired from labyrinth exploration so she had to check whether she could give loyal advice when I was about to make wrong choices, and whether she could be a reliable sword and shield supporting my side when I was about to take dangerous paths.

To that question, Denshi nodded without a moment's hesitation and showed eyes filled with will.

"Even if I have to give my life."

Satisfied with the answer, Diana nodded with a bitter smile.

Having somehow even spent a night together, it wouldn't be bad to prepare to welcome a new family member.

"Please take good care of Balkan from now on."

"...Likewise, please take care of me."

The two women held hands with faint smiles.

-Slurp.

Balkan bowed his head while drinking milk coffee made with Diana's breast milk stored from last night.

The two women who came to some kind of agreement with calm faces were lovely but incredibly embarrassing.

Should I say it was thrilling yet embarrassing to see the moment when those who sincerely cared for him connected?

"Ahem. I heard the inn was closed for a while when coming, did something happen?"

"Ah. I was going to tell you but forgot."

So I changed the subject for no reason.

"I'm thinking of opening a second branch of Cozy Winter Night Inn."

Then Diana answered with an expression as if remembering something she had forgotten.

"On the 15th floor. In Eden."