**Chapter 229: It's Been a While (9)**

Having experienced various incidents in the labyrinth, he instinctively realized that the current situation was turning quite unusual.

When a portal opened in the air with a crack, Balkan immediately took care of Ellie who was nearby.

She had been stumbling drunk until just moments ago, but now she was staring blankly into the air with a sobered face.

"......beautiful..."

The genius half-elf mage was expressing pure admiration while looking at the portal that was undoubtedly opened by the peacock beastkin who had emerged through the crack.

Perhaps she had gained insight from seeing the magic she had failed to perform unfold before her eyes.

Whatever the case, this wasn't a situation to just stand in admiration.

Balkan hugged Ellie, who was moving her lips as if calculating something while looking at the portal, and ran.

Even though Ellie was a royal mage, he couldn't leave her alone where such beings were running wild.

[LV.6■ Ignorion]

[LV.7■ Gott]

'They're fucking monsters.'

—Beware of Pride and Sloth, the peacock beastkin and the woman in white robes.

I recalled the advice that Lust's worshipper had sent through her familiar.

The peacock beastkin with the strange ability to open portals must be Pride's worshipper and the red-haired minotaur Ain beside her must be Wrath's worshipper, known by the epithet 'Doomsayer'.

When I returned to my position, Professor Manko Steel was engaged in battle with the Doomsayer, and Rubia was following the security team's lead in evacuating those who had fainted.

"Rubia. Please take care of Ellie."

"Ah, this person..."

"She's someone precious to me."

"...! Understood! I shall protect her without fail! But wait, where are you going, Mr. Balkan?!"

"The situation looks a bit precarious."

Even Professor Manko Steel and the Duke who was known as a level 50 sword saint couldn't inflict any wounds on the Doomsayer's body.

Looking at the massive red-haired minotaur's body moving heavily in the fierce battle, I could understand why.

'She's wearing magi like armor under her fur.'

Magi had properties that dispersed magic and reduced physical attacks.

Moreover, the opponent wielding such ability was a level 70 monster.

Professor Manko Steel's magic barely hit, but fireballs from mages like Fusilini or Lammel would dissipate before even touching the fur but even such magi had a weakness.

‘Pure holy power.’

A strike using the Blessing of Radiance could tear through that fur.

"Are, are you planning to jump into that melee?! That's impossible..."

Rubia, who was about to shoot down the idea, closed her mouth.

Balkan now had the eyes of a warrior about to engage in a battle worthy of mythology.

Who could stop that determination? At least not Rubia herself.

The only words she could offer were simply:

"If you die, it's all over."

"That's why I have to live."

Balkan ran toward the battlefield with that brief response while downing his last remaining magic potion that he had brought just in case.

Although Fusilini had warned about severe side effects, this wasn't the time to worry about side effects.

His benefactor who had saved him from death was in danger.

'That's reason enough to rush in without thinking twice.'

Strengthening his resolve, he activated the Blessing of Judgment Time.

He could feel his magic power swelling rapidly due to the potion's effect.

The magic power gathered in his heart through the Dragon's Heart blessing vibrated violently and circulated throughout his body.

A heartbeat five times larger than usual echoed in his ears, and an electrifying sense of omnipotence enveloped his body.

With magic manipulation ability that had become even freer than when he faced the chimera, he donned magic armor and sprinted.

Using overflowing magic power as propulsion by detonating it behind him, he arrived at explosive speed to find Gott bringing down her axe toward Celsia.

After rushing between them immediately.

-Keeeeeeeing!

While hearing the startup sound of the Blessing of Radiance, he blocked Goat's strike.

-Kaaaaaaaaang!!!

When the axe with tremendous mass hit the magic armor imbued with the Blessing of Radiance, a small explosion occurred with a thunderous sound.

It was the collision of powerful magi and holy power.

"This holy power, could it be...!!"

Gott, noticing him, stepped back hurriedly in confusion.

Balkan looked down at his cracked arm guard and his legs embedded in the marble floor, and smiled chillingly.

'That was dangerous.'

The increased magic efficiency from the Dragon's Heart blessing saved him.

If he hadn't been able to make the magic armor more solid because of it, his arm would have broken right there.

It was truly dangerous, but he survived.

The one smiling now was him, while Gott wore an expression that was rotting away, unable to smile.

"It's been a while, Lady Knight."

"......"

Taking advantage of the slight respite to greet Celsia, she stared at me with a blank face.

She had a look as if asking why are you here.

When Balkan saw Celsia's silly face with her mouth wide open, he felt a strange mischievousness rising.

"Do you perhaps not remember?"

"Ah, no. That's not it."

"Looking at you now, you clearly remember. Why did you pretend not to know me at the academy graduation ceremony?"

"Ugh, ah, no...! I, I didn't pretend not to know...!"

Celsia frantically shook her head. Seeing that made him smile and feel a strange satisfaction from saving the one who had saved him.

'Not bad.'

If he had to say whether it was good or bad, it was very good.

"That bastard..."

Gott looked at the man emanating dazzling holy power while wearing magic armor.

Whether it's holy power, magi, or magic power.

All types of power leave their user's unique texture when accumulated in the body and released.

Like body odor or fingerprints, traces remain.

And the holy power emitted by the man before him was the one that had left a strong impression in Gott's recent memory.

"So you're the bastard Sloth was talking about?"

Hearing Gott's muttering while readjusting her axe, Balkan realized that Sloth's worshipper had informed the devil worshippers about him.

'Well, that's probably why Lust passed on the information.'

As he was about to retort to that, someone grabbed Balkan's shoulder.

It was Diana with a slightly tired expression.

"Well done, Balkan. Really well done."

"Are you alright?"

He had seen her being slammed into the wall but Diana calmly answered while lightly dusting off her legs.

"Yes. My arm is slightly cracked but I applied a potion so it's fine. Your Highness, are you alright?"

"Ah. Yes. Thanks to..."

Celsia nodded while alternately looking at Balkan and Diana.

Noticing her gaze flickering toward Balkan, Diana immediately got to the point.

"Balkan. I'm sorry, but I need your help."

For Diana to ask for help to this extent must mean the opponent is not to be taken lightly.

However, having come this far, I was already prepared.

While immediately nodding, Balkan expressed his concern in a small voice so the opponent wouldn't hear.

"I can help anytime but I'm reaching my limit soon. The magic power was boosted by the potion."

Even that charged magic power was more than half depleted from blocking just that one strike.

In such a situation, how could he be of help against that monster-like minotaur...

"It's alright. Just place your hand on my back. Instead, pour your holy power into me."

Diana said while creating ice arrows with magic power.

Perhaps due to their time together, Balkan figured out what she was trying to do.

She was planning to shoot those ice arrows imbued with holy power.

For those who handle magi, holy power is the ultimate counter.

With the priests in the banquet hall unconscious after Gott's attack, he was the one with the most pure and massive holy power.

And he had thoroughly experienced its power when catching Bunny and the chimera monster before.

'If we combine Diana's attack with my Blessing of Radiance...'

This will work.

"Can you do it?"

"I have to."

"Good answer."

Though it was his first time trying this, he had to succeed.

The minotaur before them was preparing to charge again with a fully heated face but Diana had already nocked an arrow to her bowstring.

I took a deep breath and placed my palm on Diana's back.

I immediately activated the Blessing of Radiance.

-Keeeeeeeing!!

Along with the startup sound ringing in my mind, I felt my energy draining in real-time, and dazzling holy power was released.

I recalled the sensation of wrapping the Blessing of Radiance around my axe.

There was only one difference: imbuing power into someone else's weapon instead of my own.

-Crack. Crackle.

Control is difficult. The holy power being imbued into the ice arrow kept scattering here and there.

The unfamiliar application method had an effect, but the fact that the target was Diana was also a big factor.

'Too wide.'

The period of accumulating power was different. Diana's flow was too wide.

-Swoosh.

As I was struggling to get a grip on it, a small but warm hand was placed on my back.

Though I couldn't see it, I could tell it was Celsia's hand.

Woong—

Right after, Balkan's eyes flew open.

He could see the path.

Celsia's magic power created a channel for holy power to flow through.

Celsia's magic power laid down a path, showing the direction where the holy power should flow.

As I channeled holy power following the path Celsia was guiding, Diana's ice arrow began to be imbued with the dazzling light of radiance.

"Kwuooooooooo!"

In the distance, the Doomsayer rushed in with an urgent roar.

Why was it?

Though it must have been a similar situation to just before now it didn't look like a beast's charge, but rather like a desperate struggle to somehow block the fatal strike coming for her.

Balkan, Diana, and Celsia felt as if they had become one as they released the bowstring.

Zzzzzzzzzak!!!!!

Along with a storm of ice, the banquet hall was dyed in the light of radiance.