**Chapter 240: Portal Magic (2)**

Portal.

There's almost no remaining data about it, which serves as both an entrance and exit to the labyrinth.

Even Ellie, who was a bookworm at the Temple Library and Academy Grand Library, lamented that she couldn't find proper content despite searching through ancient documents.

But regardless of the portal's mystery, it holds an indispensable value for explorers like me.

'Because we can only enter the labyrinth through a portal.'

Explorers wait eagerly for the day when the portal opens once a week to enter the labyrinth.

When entering the labyrinth and moving to the next level, we must also cross through a portal.

And to return to the surface, we must cross through a portal.

What if there were no portal?

Explorers wouldn't be able to enter the labyrinth, nor would they be able to return to the surface.

"How did Ellie manage to open a portal?"

I followed Celsia's guidance as we headed to Ellie's room to the third floor of the inner castle, where Royal Magician Ellie's laboratory was.

Perhaps because of Diana's presence beside me, even the maid didn't dare to stop us.

"I'm ignorant about magic, so I'm not quite sure..."

Rubia smiled bitterly, seemingly having little knowledge despite being the granddaughter of an Academy professor.

"But I do know that she's been researching without sleep since the day Mr. Balkan entrusted her to me."

"Since a week ago? But how does Rubia know that?"

"Mr. Balkan told me to take care of Ellie! So I must watch over her until Mr. Balkan comes to check on her safety! That is the spirit of noblesse oblige to protect all people! Ohoho!"

I couldn't help but feel reassured by this woman who was jumping around wearing dress armor.

I expressed my gratitude by patting Rubia's back vigorously and looked at Diana.

"Diana, did you also know that Ellie was researching without sleep?"

"Yes. Ellie often gets so absorbed that she skips meals...But I didn't know she wasn't sleeping at all..."

The mystery of humans opening portals was unheard of, except for the Worshipper of Pride.

Ignorion, the Worshipper of Pride whom the Royal Vice Captain of Knights called the Dimensional Duke.

She had invaded the royal castle's banquet hall by opening a portal with the Doomsayer.

—Beautiful...

I remembered Ellie blankly expressing admiration while looking at the portal she had opened.

Perhaps that incomprehensible phenomenon had given Ellie strong inspiration?

By the time I had thought that far, we arrived at Ellie's laboratory.

Without bothering to knock, I flung open the door and entered.

"El...lie?"

My mouth gaped open as soon as I opened the door.

Inside the room, black papers densely covered the floor and walls.

No, those weren't black papers.

It was the text written so densely on white papers without any gaps that made them appear black.

These black papers densely occupied that room, which was slightly larger than the first floor's guest room.

And among the black papers, there were some white papers with solid lines drawn on them.

They weren't simple solid lines but lines drawn with magical power contained in the paper.

Those lines, connected to various papers, seemed to form a single magic circle and in the center of that magic circle, something black was flickering.

It had a color as dark as pitch black, though it was unstably flickering like waves and small in size, it was clearly.

"A portal..."

"Hehe."

A small laugh came from in front of the small black portal.

Ellie, who had been hidden behind the portal, poked her head out and looked at me with a “hehe” laugh.

As if it were true that she hadn't eaten or slept at all during that time, her previously puffy cheeks had slightly hollowed, and dark circles had formed under her eyes.

Even her clothes and hair accessories were exactly as they had been when I saw her at Celsia's birthday party.

Though she looked tired and exhausted, her long elf ears were twitching even more vigorously than when we had our first experience.

"Oppa."

My feet moved automatically upon hearing Ellie's voice.

Seeing me approach, she giggled and pointed at the portal.

"Remember? When we first met at the library, you asked me to look into portals."

"That's right."

"I. I tried really hard after that too. Reading ancient documents until I fell asleep, even entering the labyrinth with you because of this, and after becoming a Royal Magician, I was completely absorbed in research."

After staring intently at the portal for a while, recounting her hardships, Ellie looked straight into my eyes.

"...Did I, help you?"

Words seeking to reaffirm her value.

Even after becoming a Royal Magician admired by many magicians, even as a genius who graduated top of her class from the Academy, she still sought my acknowledgment.

"You're the best, Ellie—"

Isn't the portal one of the most mysterious things even in the labyrinth full of all kinds of mysteries?

Being able to handle it by human hands would surely be the greatest achievement—

-Smooch.

These words of praise were swallowed internally as Ellie pounced on my lips.

I smiled slightly inside and hugged her tightly.

I gently accepted Ellie, who came in for a kiss that seemed unfamiliar after so long, resulting in our lips bumping together.

"Ha, hawawa..."

"...Heheh. Oh, Ellie..."

I could barely hear Rubia's voice trembling with a red face and Diana's faint laugh in that situation.

Right now, I was focusing all my energy on comforting the girl who craved my acknowledgment and affection.

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Together with Diana, I nursed Ellie, who had fallen into a deep sleep like fainting after going several days without food and staying up all night, followed by an intense breeding kiss.

Rubia made a bewildered expression before hurriedly leaving, saying she remembered an urgent matter.

Three or four hours later, Ellie woke up with messy hair and blankly stared at the disappeared portal.

"It started twisting tremendously from when we kissed, and eventually disappeared."

Hearing that, Ellie shrugged her shoulders as if it couldn't be helped.

"Concentration is the most important thing in magic. The portal must be some kind of magic or miracle too, so it needs tremendous concentration to maintain, especially at this incomplete level."

"...Heheh. Was the kiss with Balkan good enough to make you lose concentration?"

"Ugh. Hey, that's not something a stepmother should say!"

Diana smiled with narrowed eyes at Ellie's embarrassed response.

"I'm always focused when I'm with Balkan because I have to cherish and remember the time we spend together."

"Th-that's the same for me too..."

Watching the two engage in playful conversation brought a warm smile to my heart.

The sight of mother and daughter chatting amicably, when just a few months ago they wouldn't even have a normal conversation, let alone a harsh one naturally warmed my heart.

Though I felt a slight chill in my testicles when the mother-daughter conversation turned to methods of maintaining concentration and counterattacking during breeding kisses.

After a moment of casual chat, Ellie continued speaking.

"Even though I can open a portal, it's not yet as stable as the labyrinth's portals or that Dimensional Duke's portals, and honestly, I don't even know what principle made it work. There will definitely need to be a lot of trial and error before it becomes usable."

Hearing this, it seemed that even Ellie hadn't perfectly understood and used the portal magic.

"The moment I saw the portal that Dimensional Duke's opened, sparks flew in my head. Should I call it intuition? I became certain. Though I don't know the detailed method, I felt I could roughly replicate something similar."

Witnessing Ignorion opening a portal seemed to have been a revelation to Ellie in many ways.

It seemed she could reach the result of opening a portal by roughly skipping the intermediate process, but that meant there were various problems with using it right away.

"It needs dozens of times more magical power than normal magic, or it can't be maintained for long...There are some minor issues. The biggest one is..."

But putting everything else aside, there was the most troublesome problem.

"The portal itself is so unstable that the destination point might be distorted when entering."

"You mean it spits you out at random locations like the labyrinth's portals?"

"Yes. Actually, it's even worse than that. Like the portal that Dimensional Duke's opened, for example, like when they invaded the royal castle, I still can't even grasp how to open it precisely at a specific location."

It was slightly disappointing.

If Ellie could open portals to specific locations?

If you wanted to go to the 15th floor, open a portal to the 15th floor, if you wanted to go to the 20th floor, open a portal to the 20th floor.

You could even go to the 34th floor, the deepest level of the labyrinth.

Then we could have headed to the Abyss of the labyrinth at its end.

I swallowed the rising disappointment and smiled.

"So what if you can't quite grasp it yet? We can improve the disappointing aspects through future experiments."

Today was the day Ellie's efforts shone so it was only right to give plenty of praise where it was due.

"To begin with, that person opens portals through blessings, so it can't be helped. It's even more amazing that you reproduced it with magic after seeing it just once."

Diana seemed to share the same thought as she showered Ellie with words of encouragement.

Ellie's lips twitched after receiving our pats.

It was a look that showed she was extremely happy but felt shy about openly showing those emotions.

"Hmph. I-is that so? I should be able to improve it going forward, right?"

Diana and I took turns patting Ellie's head at her words.

"Of course. You're Ellie, the genius magician."

"And Ellie, the Academy's top graduating magician."

"And the youngest Royal Magician Ellie."

While some might hear this as putting pressure on her, for Ellie who was confident in these aspects, they were words that gave her courage.

Ellie snorted and put her hands on her hips, sticking out her chest to show her confidence.

"H-hmph. Then I have no choice! I'll have to pull another all-nighter."

"That's not allowed. It's good to be enthusiastic, but right now you need to take care of your condition first."

"Balkan is right. What are you saying when you just fainted?"

"Uu...uuu...I understand..."

I couldn't help but laugh seeing Ellie immediately deflate.

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After finishing all business at the royal castle, we headed back to the inn by carriage.

Ellie joined us in the returning carriage.

"Being a Royal Magician doesn't mean you have to live only in the royal castle, it's quite a free position. You must cooperate unconditionally when the royal family calls, and sometimes go on business trips to the labyrinth, but they provide research support at the Academy professor level, and if you want, you can substitute minor tasks with monster hunting in the labyrinth."

"You go on business trips to the labyrinth?"

"I haven't gone yet, but I heard seniors take turns going several times a month."

I listened to various stories from Ellie about what Royal Magicians do, while internally organizing what had happened at the royal castle this time.

Though it was a short time, the visit to the royal castle was quite productive.

I dealt significant damage to the Doomsayer, among the duo who attacked Celsia's birthday party.

I left a debt with the Queen for saving Celsia and received a jewel containing a fairy seed, while Diana received a bracelet that increases strength.

Somehow I also heard about Zirnier’s circumstances and requested new armor.

Above all, I learned the identity of Miss Armor Knight, Celsia, shared intimacy with her, and received a hand mirror that allows us to communicate.

-Bwoong.

The bead containing Sloth's blessing, [Incompetent Magician's Blessing] that Celsia had, vibrated.

[Th-that thing. Hand it over to me! Someone soft like Sloth would only give weak things, it would be a better choice for you to satisfy my hunger...]

Bunny tried to tempt me with various proposals targeting it, but it wasn't acceptable.

Between feeding inefficient materials to improve a weapon's performance and strengthening one's divine power, the latter should obviously take priority.

By the time I finished thinking about Ellie's portal magic experiments and future tasks, we had arrived at the inn.

As soon as I opened the carriage door and came out, I saw a black-haired woman welcoming me with a worried face.

"Master!!!"

-Squeeze!

Denshi ran over and clung to my body, tightly hugging my upper body.

The soft and bouncy body of the nearly naked slave woman rubbed against me sensually, strongly shaking my reason for a moment.

"Why did you come so late! You said you'd be back in a few days! I waited so long but you didn't come! And all I heard were bad news like the royal castle being attacked!"

"Were you worried?"

"How could I not be worried?! Huu...Thank goodness you're safe..."

"Senior whines so much. She's desperate because she couldn't take care of her lord."

"Shut up!"

I flicked the collar of Denshi who shouted at Belle's comment from behind.

"Kheuk...Huu..."

She let out a moan of pleasure at the choking sensation.

Who could treat harshly a woman who worried about them so much?

Though pulling the collar to its limit to choke her neck might seem a bit rough from others' perspective.

At least in our master-servant relationship, it was reasonable, so there wasn't much to be concerned about.

"...What is this?"

However, it didn't seem right in Ellie's eyes.

Eyes filled equally with confusion, questioning, hostility, and anger glared fiercely at Denshi still in my arms, then turned to me.

"...Huh?"

And that was the same for Denshi too.

"Oppa. Why is that woman here?"

"Why is she with Master?"