**Chapter 255: Labyrinth Saint (1)**

My gaze never lost sight of the prey.

The head of the Elder Lich, cut by the oversized axe blessed with radiance, flew through the air.

I felt the magi in its eye socket directed at me and at that moment.

—That, holy power.

I felt as if the creature's magi was speaking to me.

—You? The one who destroyed my laboratory.

I instinctively knew that this wasn't a simple illusion.

A woman's voice flowed from the Elder Lich, which had neither mouth nor vocal organs and as the magi illuminating the Elder Lich's eyes rippled, it reflected like a mirror the existence that must be somewhere.

The woman in white robes dwelling in the Elder Lich's eyes took me in.

The moment our eyes met, I instinctively furrowed my brow.

With unfocused eyes, she gave the impression of a slightly mad scientist.

Her eye sockets were sunken with dark circles, and the red bloodstains soaking the ends of her pure white robes gave an eerily creepy feeling.

From the woman who seemed to possess an unstable mind, magi of sloth similar to, no, even greater than the Elder Lich's flowed out.

[So this monster is that lowly being's subordinate.]

According to Bunny, the Elder Lich's master, the being who had spread Elder Liches on the 19th floor, as the Vice Commander had said, that woman in white robes was clearly a worshipper of sloth.

—Stay right there and wait.

Was it revenge, or curiosity about the one who defeated the Elder Lich?

—You too, I'll make you fertilizer for my great experiment.

The sloth worshipper looked straight at me and raised her corners of her mouth like a madwoman.

-Crack!

And then, cracks began to form in the Elder Lich's skeletal body.

I took my eyes off the sloth worshipper and glared at the Elder Lich's body.

The sphere full of magi that had been created while the Elder Lich was blocking my advance with its undead army now shone from within its body.

What had been prepared as a final strike had now become a self-destruct device.

Boom—

Just before the bone fragments of the shattered Elder Lich scattered in all directions like a post-explosion grenade and the roar sounded the world stopped regardless of my will.

[Blessing of Time of Judgment]

– Once per day, gain a time of judgment.

– Activates unconsciously when an unperceived threat to life approaches.

– Wisdom +3, +10 when conditions are maximally met

Condition: Enter the time of judgment.

An unperceived threat to life.

But even with this blessing activated, just staying still wouldn't change the future.

Even in time flowing slowly as if stopped, the sharp bone fragments beginning to scatter in all directions were coated with sticky magi, which even Zirnier armor couldn't block.

It wasn't just me who was in danger.

The party members and expedition members nearby were too. Those without even decent armor like mine would surely suffer massive damage.

I did what I could in the current situation. I quickly swung my axe toward it.

[Quickly eat it, Bunny!]

[No. If I eat something like that, I'll get indigestion. My stomach will obviously hurt for days. Do you truly have no human heart?]

[No time for wordplay!]

[Tch. Just this once.]

Perhaps because the situation was that urgent, Bunny followed my words without threatening to add another contract, and immediately opened her maw wide.

As tremendous magi burst forth from the self-destructing Elder Lich and its fragments scattered everywhere.

-Chomp!

Bunny, opening her maw like a beast, swallowed the exploding Elder Lich.

-Boom!

An enormous roar and massive vibration were felt from the axe that had swallowed the explosion's aftermath.

My mouth automatically closed from the shock traveling up my hand holding the axe.

When I thrust Bunny's uncontrollably vibrating axe blade straight into the swamp ground, the swamp began to bubble like lava, absorbing some of the explosion's aftermath.

[Feels like everything I've eaten until now is coming up...ugh. You. You'll definitely have to repay this debt.]

[Okay, okay. Well done. Really.]

[Hmph. Pathetic guy. Praise me more.]

I nodded at Bunny who was grumbling as if she'd finally caught an opportunity after a long time.

Whatever the case, thanks to her we were able to minimize the damage.

While stroking the axe handle saying "really well done," I looked around.

"The undead...are collapsing..."

One of the expedition members who had been captured muttered.

As they said, when the Elder Lich who held control over the undead perished, the undead that had been rushing in like waves began sinking into the swamp one by one.

The death of countless undead who would have become the army of the Elder Lich and the sloth worshipper and caused greater chaos if more time had passed.

"It's over. It's over...! The Elder Lich is really dead...!"

"We're free! We're finally free!"

By defeating alone the monster that led countless undead, I felt my existence rising to an even higher level.

[LV.47 Nam Soo-jin]

[Stamina:(17+18) Strength:(17+11) Agility:(17+11) Wisdom:(8+9-3) Finesse:(5+11)]

[Free Points: 16 points]

"Damn."

Looking at my status window, I saw my level had risen beyond imagination.

The last time I checked was when I was slashing the undead until just now.

Back then I was level 39 and had used up all my free points.

Though I had cut down dozens of undead after that, the experience gained wasn't very satisfying given my level.

But an 8-level increase at once?

It was one of the highest increases so far, and proof that this Elder Lich had been no easy opponent.

'If I hadn't gained an advantage in compatibility through the blessing of radiance, it might have really been dangerous.'

That's how powerful the Elder Lich's magi was.

Even Ellie, who could handle high-power magic capable of melting even monsters that wielded magi, couldn't break through the Elder Lich's barrier in one go but now there was no need to worry about such things.

The Elder Lich had been consumed by Bunny without even leaving a soul stone behind, and the undead it controlled had sunk into the swamp.

I hunted monsters and grew using their souls as fertilizer.

While continuing the happy contemplation of how to use the free points, the evidence of growth, I realized this wasn't the time for such thoughts.

'The sloth worshipper....'

After I killed the Elder Lich, she had somehow saw me.

As expected, she knew about what happened on the 16th floor too, and since I had killed another monster she controlled, it was almost certain she would target me.

—You too, I'll make you fertilizer for my great experiment.

Along with the words the sloth worshipper had muttered, I recalled the sloth experiment records that Idelbert and I had discovered.

'Records of the eternal sleep body experiment...was it?'

I don't remember the exact contents, but I remember it was about trying to create superior bodies by crossbreeding monsters like wyverns and bone jaguars with humans.

If I get caught by the sloth worshipper, I might become a sperm donor for monsters.

Since I had absolutely no desire to be fucked by monsters and donate sperm, I needed to leave the 19th floor before she came.

I recalled the scenery of the place where the sloth worshipper had been.

A place near the wall where pink tentacles writhed savagely, tightening like vaginal walls.

It was clearly the tentacle maze where supremely powerful succubi were said to dwell.

That infamous maze stretching from the 23rd to 25th floors would take time to escape from even for a sloth worshipper.

In other words, there was a bit of time to spare.

"Thank you! Thank you so much!"

"You and the party you led saved us!"

The expedition members who still didn't know my name approached and bowed their heads in gratitude.

"Brother! Thank you so— ugh..."

Jeremy, who stood at the front as if representing them, tried to express gratitude but grimaced and grabbed his arm.

"Are you hurt?"

"Ah. Yes... When the Elder Lich exploded earlier, some fragments hit me. But it's bearable."

There was a small hole in Jeremy's forearm that he was holding.

Though Bunny had swallowed the explosion's aftermath, he couldn't completely consume all those bone fragments that had burst out at high speed.

I wanted to give him a healing potion if I could, but unfortunately I had none.

'Even the healing potions I had managed to get were all used up during the battle with the Elder Lich.'

"Just put some spit on it. You're a man."

"No, brother, that's something even a woman wouldn't easily say..."

"I'll tell another party's priest to heal you on the way. Shouldn't you all rest in Eden too? Get ready to leave first."

"Ah, yes!"

While it wasn't entirely unpleasant to receive gratitude from others, there wasn't time for this, so I quickly responded and gave instructions to prepare to leave the 19th floor.

Stories about what they'd been doing all this time could wait until we returned to Eden.

After briefly watching Jeremy and the expedition members smoothly following my words, I headed toward my party members.

Finding them was easy. They were gathered in a circle not far from where I had faced the Elder Lich.

"...?"

It was strange.

Clearly when the battle started, they had begun fighting from the opposite side from me.

Though that gap had narrowed each time the Elder Lich retreated while controlling the undead, there was no reason for them to be huddled together as if examining someone who had fallen...

'Shit.'

A chill ran down my spine for a moment.

I immediately ran to the party members gathered in a circle.

As expected, a terrible smell of blood wafted over.

"...Balkan."

Jubeel, who noticed my approach, stopped me. Her complexion was not good, even as an understatement.

I swallowed my resolve and asked.

"Who died?"

"No, they're not dead...not dead yet."

Not dead yet.

Meaning they might die soon.

"You shouldn't look. The injuries are too severe—"

"Move aside, Jubeel."

"......"

After looking back and forth between my face and behind her for a moment, Jubeel finally clenched her fist.

As I walked down the path she cleared, the party members one by one looked at me and lowered their heads as if apologetic.

Rubia was quite injured but alive. Ellie and Nuer were fine too, having been well protected.

The Amel Drexia party also had some injuries but was in relatively good condition.

Then, there was only one person left.

"...Ah..."

I looked at the woman lying in front of Priest Hope, who was desperately pouring out healing miracles.

"Mas...ter..."

Denshi looked at me and smiled painfully.

"Thank... goodness... you're... alive..."

With fist-sized holes in her abdomen and forearm, she gave me a faint smile as she bled out her intestines and blood from where she had been pierced by the Elder Lich's bone fragments.