**Chapter 257: Labyrinth Saint (3)**

Paladin Beer, who belonged to the Earth Mother Goddess Order's Eden branch, looked at the man before her.

"Follow carefully. Don't slip."

Wearing dark armor like dragon scales, he led the group from the very front.

The swamps of the 19th floor, where legs would sink with just a few steps, froze like ice the moment his feet touched them, creating a path to walk on.

It was a technique she had seen before when they met on the 18th floor, but now its range was much wider than before.

"Damn. Don't you get tired?"

When Jubeel, the cow person beside him, asked while extracting breast milk into a milk bottle, the man answered calmly despite the grotesque sight.

"As my Finesse has improved, I can do more complex things with much less magical power than before."

"What are you talking about? I only know how to swing a sword. I don't get any of that."

"...I'm the fool for explaining it to Jubeel."

"Anyway, take it easy. You worked the hardest after all."

Her words were right. After all, he had contributed the most in this battle against the Elder Lich.

The Elder Lich, who controlled countless undead created by necromancers and wielded disgusting magi, was certainly a powerful monster.

It would have been difficult enough to deal with its main body alone, but the Elder Lich also commanded its subordinates to block his path.

Countless undead gathered from nearby floors including the 19th floor.

While the party and expedition members dealt with their share, which was vast, the amount he handled alone was no small matter either.

As the Elder Lich retreated from his relentless advance, it moved the undead that were fighting other companions to kill him instead.

Thanks to this, the party members gained some breathing room, but he who was fighting the Elder Lich alone had to shoulder an even greater burden but in the end, he succeeded.

He beheaded the Elder Lich.

Ignoring his wounds, he stubbornly swung his axe of light.

Even as his armor was battered amid the onslaught of countless undead, he rejoiced when enemies came within range of his axe and hacked them apart.

Even Beer, the sword and shield of the temple, was left dumbfounded watching the barbaric and fierce warrior's combat - that's how brutal the struggle was.

But, it was strange.

The warrior who had been brutally and fiercely staining his armor with enemy blood used holy power to heal others.

It wasn't uncommon to occasionally see those who received holy power sword ki or miracles in the form of blessings.

There were cases where such people joined the order and became paladins or priests following the Earth Mother Goddess. Beer was a prime example.

However, the man before her didn't just wrap holy power around his axe.

'He wielded holy power according to his will.'

His holy power was both a blade that cut enemy necks and a healing touch that soothed others' wounds.

'This is impossible.'

Paladin Beer cannot use healing miracles or blessings.

Priest Hope cannot fight using holy power.

It's not for nothing that the roles of paladins and priests are separated in the temple.

No matter how hard ordinary people try, they cannot break down the barriers between their domains of holy power.

Even if one could use both holy power combat and miracles, those capable of it could be counted on one hand in the entire temple.

Even Idelbert Adeline, who was once the strongest paladin, couldn't perform healing miracles strong enough to save dying people.

If there was one exception, it would be Serif Adeline, the Saint chosen by the Earth Mother Goddess.

Only she could bestow powerful healing miracles and blessings while also striking down enemies with holy light.

But here, another exception appeared.

One who could behead the Elder Lich while also saving others' lives with healing miracles.

Then, could he be...

"Could he be a Saint chosen by the Earth Mother Goddess?"

Startled, Beer jumped at the voice from behind.

"Priest H-Hope! Such words—"

"But. Aren't you thinking something similar, Sir Beer?"

Hope's eyes sparkled as he glanced at Balkan.

"The holy power he showed had warmth similar to the Saint's. While being a terrifyingly cold sword before enemies, conversely he showed a surprisingly warm heart towards his own people."

"...Even so..."

"I owe a debt to Sir Balkan. He supported me with donations when I was crippled, and thanks to that I could get medicine and stand again. I'm not the only one who received help."

Following Hope's gesture, Beer looked at those following the ice path Balkan had created.

"Not just the expedition members, but Fusilini and Aldente. All of our party members were saved by Sir Balkan at some point. We owe him greatly. He could have exploited us and demanded more, but he was satisfied with just a few herbs and tokens of friendship. Even for saving me, he was satisfied with just asking me to use healing miracles well. That's why I desperately saved Denshi too."

"..."

"If someone who saves those in danger and helps those crying in pain isn't a Saint, then who is a Saint? Ah..."

Hope gazed at Balkan with moved eyes.

Since it seemed he would start praying if left alone, Beer stopped him.

"Priest Hope. I understand what you're thinking but you seem too excited."

"Sir Beer!"

"I know what you want to say."

She had witnessed with her own eyes that the man possessed quite good character and matching extraordinary abilities.

However, it wasn't enough to match being a Saint equal to the Saint.

But it wasn't at a level where he should remain just an explorer either.

"We should inform the other high priests and paladins of his achievements."

With that level of holy power control, even if not affiliated with the temple, he must surely have sublime faith in the Earth Mother Goddess.

While the temple is open to all, those chosen within are very few.

Considering his appearance today, he could easily be among those few chosen ones.

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'If other high priests and priests target me too...would Serif dislike that?'

Balkan frowned while listening to Hope and Beer's chatter from behind.

People's voices are coming again.

"To clear the swamp area of the 18th floor this quickly, when it took days on the way here..."

"The Elder Lich and undead nearly wiped out not just the 19th floor but the monsters here too. Of course it's faster when we don't have to fight monsters."

"It's not just that. This ice path makes moving incredibly convenient. Look there. Balkan was it? The ground freezes everywhere his feet touch. Thanks to that, the heat is reduced, and we're less likely to get infected by poison or disease from stepping in swamp sewage."

"He still has magic power left after fighting that Elder Lich alone? What an incredible guy...Wait, if it's Balkan, wasn't he the Union Leader's disciple?"

"My word. So there was a reason he's strong. We'll have lots to talk about at the drinking party this time."

"Ohoho! It makes me happy seeing everyone praise Sir Balkan!"

"Waaah. I used too much magic power this time and I'm tired. Balkan carry me..."

The chatter of expedition and party members reaches his ears directly.

While it was natural to hear since they weren't that far apart...

The voice of each person, the intervals between breaths, the sound of feet stepping on ice, the vibrations of the swamp swaying under the ice, the sound of tropical tree leaves brushing against each other, the noise of small insects and bugs flapping their wings.

The sensation of blood pumped from the heart flowing through the whole body and the movement of each muscle fiber, the presence of magical and holy power fluctuating in the heart and lower abdomen.

All of these things are felt much more clearly than before, incomparable to previously.

He knew where this strange sensation originated from.

[LV.47 Nam Soo-jin]

[Health:(17+18) Strength:(17+11) Agility:(17+11) Wisdom:(8+9-3) Finesse:(21+11)]

[Free Points: 0 points]

Technique, which had only 5 basic stats, instantly hit the 30s after investing 16 free points.

This was because he poured all his precious 16 free points due to the pressure and anxiety of having to save Denshi.

He doesn't regret that decision.

'If I had lost Denshi trying to save points, I would have regretted that choice for the rest of my life.'

So the reason for saying this now isn't about wanting to take back that choice or anything.

Just that the strange sensation I realized when Finesse exceeded 30 points surprised me.

A similar sensation to the strange sense of omnipotence I felt when Wisdom hit close to 30 while fighting the chimera monster now resides in me.

-Clang.

As I took a step, the swamp within several meters radius froze, creating an ice path.

Until catching the Elder Lich, I couldn't make such a wide ice path.

No, I could do it but it required quite a bit of magic power.

I couldn't afford such waste and luxury considering magic power exhaustion but now it just feels comfortable. Magic power gathered in my feet naturally like breathing, freezing the unstable terrain.

Yet the magic power consumed is significantly less. The naturally recovering magic power is more than what's being consumed.

I've become able to handle magic power more efficiently.

And it's not just magic power.

Muscles and blessings, body movements and holy power utilization.

As I felt while treating Denshi and using the blessing of radiance, everything I handle has become much more 'efficient'.

Stamina, Strength, Agility, Wisdom, Finesse, all stats are important.

Stamina, Strength and Agility go without saying.

Being able to fight such tough and unreasonable battles is all thanks to having roots in a strong body.

However, Wisdom and Finesse, while Wisdom is a stat specialized in increasing magic power quality and handling stronger magic and magical power.

Finesse was a stat that raised the overall level by improving control of physical activity, magic power, and holy power.

'It's probably because it exceeded 30 like Stamina, and the dramatic difference is felt from raising 16 points at once but...'

This sensation of feeling stronger felt good but I shouldn't get complacent.

The Elder Lich was probably just one of the experimental monsters controlled by the Sloth worshipper.

The enemy is strong, though I'm catching up quickly, it's not satisfactory yet.

I want to get stronger. I didn't want to retreat because the Sloth worshipper was chasing.

I wanted to reach the end of the labyrinth quickly, cutting down all the buzzing flies around while saying "come if you dare".

Tightening up the loosening atmosphere, the group headed towards Eden again.

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The place we arrived at after crossing the 15th floor portal was none other than the grand fountain.

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A woman wearing sweats and reading manga while scratching her belly caught my eye.

I didn't know then, but now I could tell who her appearance originated from.

Seeing Celsia’s artistic body, which had become plump and voluptuous due to the lazy will of laziness and the fat from the potato chips, I had a fleeting feeling that this wasn’t a bad thing.

"You finally came!"

The woman with Celsia's appearance discovered me and approached slowly with a bright smile.

For a moment, a laugh escaped from me too.

'Beer and Hope were going on about Saints and such...but I'm actually having secret meetings with a demon.'

"Coming back like this...means you'll grant my request, right?"

The demon of sloth looking up at me raised the corners of her mouth.