**Chapter 264: Who are you? (4)**

While letting Jeremy enjoy the long-awaited reunion, I continued my conversation with Ellie and Denshi.

I was curious about the reason for their sudden relationship development.

"...I was thinking wrong."

The reason first came from Ellie's mouth.

"I was blinded by jealousy. I promised my brother that I would get along well, so we didn't fight, but honestly, being together felt like my heart was festering, you know?"

"......"

"I kept wondering why he pays more attention to that woman when I'm here, and so is my adoptive mother."

I held my breath for a moment at Ellie's straightforward words.

I knew all along that Ellie was conscious of and wary of Denshi, but I didn't know she thought so badly of her.

"...But, this time I realized why brother cares so much about Denshi."

However, a big change came to Ellie's perception, who had only thought badly of Denshi.

"Even when facing monsters, she shows no signs of surprise or panic. She calmly analyzes the enemy and finds ways to deal with them. I still shrink a little when I see monsters, but Denshi doesn't."

Having worked as a slave explorer for a long time and trained by Intert, the Puppeteer’s underling, Denshi had already acquired the qualifications to rise to the upper explorer rank.

It was a valuable talent that Ellie, who still had little experience in labyrinth expeditions, didn't possess.

"She naturally blends into the party and provides support where needed. She would definitely have been a great help to my brother, who frequently goes on labyrinth explorations."

Presence detection, shooting skills, dagger techniques—Denshi demonstrates above-average abilities in everything without any shortcomings.

Though she doesn't have any overwhelmingly specialized skills, her above-average agility stat and versatility keep the party centered.

However, that alone wasn't enough to change her existing perception.

"If such a person is also prepared to sacrifice her life when my brother is in the most danger...I have no choice but to acknowledge her."

But even such a worst impression can change when you see someone trying to save a loved one by sacrificing their own life.

I wonder what Ellie thought when she saw Denshi forcing a smile so that others wouldn't be sad, even though she didn't know when she might die.

—Do you trust Balkan?

Looking at Ellie, who acknowledged Denshi's spirit of sacrifice, reminded me of her adoptive mother, Diana.

—Can you trust him completely, and wield your sword for him? Can you sacrifice yourself to protect him?

How did Denshi answer her question?

—Even if it costs me my life!

That answer created what we have today.

Ellie was deeply impressed by and acknowledged Denshi, who tried to save me even at the risk of her own life.

I was pleased to see the development of their relationship.

And the person in question, Denshi...

"...C-creepy!"

She shouted with a bright red face.

"D-don't pretend to acknowledge me like a master! Th-that's really embarrassing?! I didn't notice when the master said it, but it's super creepy when someone else says it! Ugh...! You pointed-ear!"

"What?! Hey you! After I went so far to say all that, that's what you say?! Ah, don't run away?!!"

Denshi, with an expression full of embarrassment and shyness, ran away into the inn.

I smiled at the sight.

'As always. A kid who can't be honest.'

Even while spitting out harsh words, I saw Denshi's mouth corners lifted uncontrollably.

Denshi had lived as an orphan and a slave, being exploited.

Recognition from a peer who had risen to the position of a royal magician would have lit a huge fire in the heart of Denshi, who was quite lonely inside, and became a motivation for inner growth.

Ellie, who had perked up her elf ears at the "pointed-ear" comment and was about to chase after Denshi, turned her head to look at me.

"Brother!"

"Yes."

"I won't lose either!"

With a face as flushed as Denshi's, and red eyes full of determination, Ellie shouted at me.

"I'll also become an amazing magician that my brother can rely on and want to rely on, just like Denshi!"

After declaring proudly, Ellie said in a crawling voice out of embarrassment.

"Please, take care of me in the future...!"

After squeezing out those words, Ellie ran away as if escaping to chase after Denshi, and I looked up at the night sky.

'Too awkward to be friends, so frenemies. Or rivals.'

Looking at the two who had formed a new relationship, a pleased smile naturally appeared on my face.

'Friends and rivals jealousy 3p sex. It might be possible.'

Rival sex competing on who can make the other climax more.

Fighting over who gets to insert first, a cock competition.

Just thinking about it made my mouth water.

After distracting my mind with frivolous thoughts, I went back into the inn.

Jeremy was sitting at the table with a dumbfounded face.

"B-brother. Just now, both of them went upstairs very quickly..."

"It's okay. They're both ripening nicely."

"Excuse me?"

"More importantly, have you sorted out your feelings?"

"Yes. Thanks to you."

Jeremy smiled slightly and gently stroked the top of Anya's head.

Dullahan Anya was staring only at Jeremy, clacking her jaw.

"What are you going to do now?"

"I'm thinking of studying in the necromancy faction for a while to gain knowledge. I need to make a nice body for Anya."

"Faction?"

"It's like a clan of magicians. I met Amel by chance. Thanks to that, I switched from spearman to necromancer."

Jeremy, who had joined the 15th floor expedition, says he met various connections.

With skills just enough to barely kill goblins, naturally doing odd jobs in expeditions, Jeremy happened to come across the necromancy faction that Amel Drexia belonged to.

Discovering more talent in necromancy than spearmanship, and judging that necromancy was more suitable for his goal of reviving Anya, he joined the necromancy faction.

And now he is in the position of a junior necromancer to Amel Drexia.

'So that's why his level was higher.'

I thought it might be due to the experience buff, but it seems he also gained some backing.

"Come to think of it, Amel took my semen saying she'd give it to her junior."

"Haha... A man's sperm contains yang energy, so it's often used as a material for necromancy. If I were still a man, I could have been somewhat self-sufficient, but now, as you can see..."

Jeremy lifted his large breasts with a displeased face.

Indeed, with such bouncy breasts and a body optimized for a female pig, he couldn't produce semen.

I've heard there's also a female explorer with the curse of futanari in the lower floors, but that wasn't even a common type of curse.

"Anyway. I plan to continue studying until I can make a body for Anya. If my knowledge is insufficient, I might even enter the Academy."

The Academy had many researchers, like labyrinth ecologists and whatnot. There would also be professors who study and handle necromancy.

"If you ever need anything in the future, feel free to come to this inn. I'll help as much as I can."

I had also made connections at the Academy, like Professor Manko Steel, so if requested, they would probably at least listen.

"...Thank you. Really, really thank you, brother!"

I pushed away Jeremy, who was clinging to me, thrusting his wicked large breasts at me, saying he would repay all the favors he had received for the rest of his life, no matter what.

Actually, I didn't push him away; Anya clamped her jawbone firmly on Jeremy's pants leg, clacking her jaw.

"Anya? Huh? What's wrong?"

-Clack! Clackclack!!

Jeremy tilted his head in confusion and moved away from me thanks to Anya hanging onto his pants leg.

Could it be that she felt jealousy even in her skeletal state?

Dullahan Anya burned with a ghostly aura in her eye sockets as she looked at me.

Like a crazy skeleton head. Her obsession with her partner, even after death, was fanatical.

"You should go now. It's getting late."

"Ah, I'm sorry! It's already this time..."

Jeremy, who had fixed Dullahan Anya's jaw between his cleavage, bowed to me.

"I'll visit you from time to time. Brother! May you enjoy a long life and good health!"

"Sure. I'm not that old yet, but anyway, take care."

After seeing off the priests and now Jeremy, the inn finally became a bit quiet.

Only then did I find the leisure to rest.

I trudged back to my room, took off my full armor and helmet, and put down Bunny.

Without even thinking about cleaning the equipment soaked in swamp and blood, I just surrendered my body to the bed.

I was damn tired, but the satisfaction of having worked hard another day led me to a comfortable sleep.

It was morning and Diana still hadn't returned.

Putting aside my curiosity about what she might be doing to Idelbert.

The three of us at the inn—me, Denshi, and Ellie—prepared and ate a simple breakfast.

"This tastes subtly bad..."

"It's because you made the omelet too salty, Denshi."

"What? Your salad is terrible too, Ellie. It's just raw vegetables without even a little dressing!"

"Elves can eat this kind of diet well, you know?"

I watched Ellie and Denshi bickering from the morning with a pleased face as I spread butter on bread.

Their omelet and salad were hardly edible, but I kept putting them in my mouth even while eating bread with a small sense of responsibility.

"Brother."

"Master."

Then both of them stared at me.

As if asking which one tasted better.

"...It's a tie."

"Ugh!"

"Aack!"

Ellie and Denshi let out sighs of disappointment simultaneously.

It was impossible to distinguish between them as they both served dishes that were bad in very subtle ways.

After spending such a morning that made me miss Diana, I maintained my equipment during the remaining free time until Hope and Beer arrived.

Maintenance was just cleaning the dirty parts for care.

"Huh?"

Just as I was finishing up, I heard a surprised voice from the next room.

Out of curiosity, I approached slightly, and Denshi, who was also maintaining her equipment, looked at me.

"I heard a sound of surprise."

"Ah, Master. Well, I just saw it too..."

She showed me the jewel she was holding.

It was a jewel that was originally black, but now more than half had turned white.

This was the jewel that recorded Denshi's "free activity" time, permitted by Intert, the Puppeteer underling and Denshi's master.

'When that jewel turns completely white, she has to return to the underworld, right?'

At least that's what I remembered.

It was a future I would have to prepare for someday.

Just the thought of Denshi having to obey someone other than me made me so irritated that it gave me goosebumps.

"Well, until we went to catch the Elder Lich, the black part was more. But when I checked it this time, the white part has greatly increa—"

"Lord Balkan! Are you there?! We've come to escort you!!"

Just as I was about to listen to Denshi's words, a loud voice calling for me sounded from outside.

It was Priest Hope.

"Is it time already?"

"Hmph. Take care, Master! Tonight I will definitely serve you a more delicious meal!"

I waved my hand with a bitter smile at that confident voice.

"I'll look forward to it."

"Hehe. I will repay your expectations twice as much, Master."

After giving a smile to Denshi, who was showing a confident expression, I prepared to go out wearing neat clothes and a helmet.

I was now so anxious without my helmet and equipment, and only Bunny on my back.

After finishing preparations and going outside the inn, Priest Hope and Paladin Beer were waiting to escort me.

"It's a good day, Lord Balkan."

"Yes. Let's go. It's just right ahead."

As I gestured to Beer, who was greeting me respectfully, she nodded.

"Yes. Bishop Jellicy has been counting the days to meet with you, Lord Balkan."

And so we headed toward the temple.

[...Balkan.]

[Yeah.]

[You, did you feel it?]

[...A little, barely.]

Inside the reception room where the priest named Louis Jelli-something and his guard were supposed to be.

With my skills maxed out to sharpen my senses, I could very faintly feel the unpleasant magi emanating from inside the reception room.

It seemed like a presence that had been hidden to the limit, covered layer upon layer, but it couldn't escape my and Bunny's radar.

[It seems like it will be a good meal.]

-Slurp.

Bunny licked her red lips, sensing that magi.