**Chapter 269: What I can give (1)**

Cleassia looked at her right arm floating in the air.

The moment she confirmed her right arm had been severed.

The moment her rapier broke and she realized she had no chance of winning this contest of strength.

Having made a cold judgment, Cleassia directed her power not at her opponent but at herself.

Suicide.

An act that would completely eliminate the possibility of becoming a hostage, and as a bonus, erase all the information in her head.

It was an act that required such determination and was evidence that Cleassia, as a demon worshipper, possessed important information that should not be handed over to the temple.

Cleassia manipulated her magi with the determination to completely crush her own heart.

But.

"......"

Swish—

The magi that was about to completely burst her heart suddenly stiffened and stopped.

No matter how grand one's dreams or how loyal to an organization, and despite being trash who has committed numerous evil deeds, a human is still human.

All humans experience hesitation at crucial moments of decision.

Especially when that decision leads to one's own death, even the strongest resolve will inevitably waver for a moment.

That small hesitation became a gap, preventing Cleassia from dying.

"Where do you think you're going to find peace in death?"

-Kiiiiing!

The manifested blessing of radiance poured over Cleassia, whose heart was half-crushed.

That holy power soon became a miracle of healing, eliminating one by one the injuries that would have led to Cleassia’s death.

Balkan looked down at Cleassia with her pale complexion and spoke.

The reason for her pale complexion was likely due to excessive bleeding from the blood gushing from her severed arm, but that wasn't the only reason.

"You have so much to tell us while you're still alive."

Killing all of Priest Jellicy’s connections, deceiving a priest for over two years, gradually brainwashing them, and planning whatever scheme against the Earth Mother Goddess Order.

Having caused such a commotion, Cleassia had the obligation to confess all her reasons in detail.

"You...! What have I done to you to deserve this! In these chaotic times when we should be joining forces—urgh—"

"Let's not say things that might cause strange misunderstandings."

With a heavy axe blade striking Cleassia briefly on the nape of her neck, she lost consciousness as her head hit the ground.

He was already busy enough with the labyrinth conquest and didn't want to be suspected and questioned about strange accusations of being in league with the demon worshipers.

[Aren't you going to finish eating that one?]

The gluttony demon Bunny asked, swallowing her saliva as she looked at the defenseless Cleassia.

[Later. I'll ask when everything is finished.]

Balkan shook his head at that hunger-filled question, postponing it for later.

After Serif enters the labyrinth and talks with Cleassia, if permission to "dispose" of her is granted, then she could be used as growth material for Bunny.

"Ah! Indeed! Indeed...!!!"

While thinking about this, he noticed people with their hands clasped in prayer.

Among them, his gaze was drawn to one who was expressing particularly intense emotions, even shedding tears and vigorously nodding his head.

Priest Hope quickly approached and gently grasped Balkan's hand.

"Balkan, were you a saint all along?"

-Thwack!

He instinctively slapped away the hand holding his.

"Eh."

"Sorry. I'm not comfortable with men holding hands."

It was psychologically difficult to accept a man he only occasionally saw, who outwardly seemed normal, twisting his body like a female and holding his hand.

"Ah, no. I was being inconsiderate."

"Yes. Anyway, I'm not a saint or anything like that."

He denied it, shaking his head, but Hope didn't seem inclined to listen.

His gaze had already reached something close to worship.

"And why is everyone bowing their heads and praying? Don't you see this woman?"

"Ah! S-sorry!"

When he asked the paladins who were absentmindedly praying while stepping on Cleassia’s head, they apologized with honorifics and seized Cleassia, realizing their mistake.

"Priests with remaining strength, prepare anti-magi miracles!"

Several priests, including Hope, gathered to form holy power into shackles, which seemed like a quite useful technique for subduing those with magi.

'Could I copy that?'

Thinking to himself, he tried to manipulate holy power, but his remaining trace of holy power dispersed with a terrible headache.

Just yesterday it was the Elder Lich, and today a servant of the Envy worshipper.

His body and mind had reached their limits after depleting both mana and holy power in succession.

He probably needed to rest thoroughly for the next two days to recover.

He felt he could intuitively succeed in one attempt...it was a pity.

As Balkan held his dizzy head and caught his breath, someone approached and illuminated his face.

"...Balkan. No, Sir Balkan."

Until now, she had been excessively casual, almost treating him like a subordinate, but now her voice was imbued with deep respect.

It seemed her character, which valued returning favors, had influenced this.

"Is your injured hand alright?"

"Of course! Thank you for your concern. I... I owe you a great debt."

The face of the lion beastkin, who bowed deeply in gratitude, was crossed by complex emotions like betrayal, anger, and bitterness.

Well, if someone you had completely trusted and supported for the past two years turned out to be a servant of a demon worshipper, wouldn't anyone feel depressed?

Especially for her, a priestess who despises demon worshippers, the sense of betrayal would be even greater.

"Giltear...no, the traitor Closier is someone whom one of the high priests of the order was pursuing. As much as I'd like to reward you immediately... there are still some complicated procedures left. I need to inform that person as well."

"It's fine to receive the reward later. Lady Serif will also be coming to the labyrinth."

"...You knew?"

"I was asked by Lady Serif to capture that traitor."

"Oh...! Indeed, your handling of holy power seemed remarkably skillful..."

"Pardon?"

"Hmm!"

Balkan tilted his head, but Jellicy nodded with a face of understanding.

'So Sir Balkan was a secret weapon raised by Lady Serif...!'

Nothing else could explain that miraculous purity and control ability of holy power.

While the utilization of holy power can be improved through training, its quality is innate. It cannot be overcome through effort.

In other words, it meant that Serif was secretly raising a male with a level of holy power similar to herself, who is called a saint.

Jellicy recalled Serif, whom she had seen during the annual "true ceremony" expedition in the labyrinth at the beginning of each new year, although they had never been in the same party.

The pure white cat beastkin with a smile that seemed loving to everyone yet subtly drew lines...

After that thought, the man before her looked completely different.

'Right. He's a man.'

And not just any man.

Even for a woman who has made a marriage contract with another man, he was a man with such an attractive body that her heart would naturally race upon facing his large pectoral muscles.

A man with such a fierce body that would make the paladins and priests of the Earth Mother Goddess Order, who value purity, rub their thighs just by looking at him, as well as an outstanding warrior.

Jellicy was reminded of her dead lover when she looked at Balkan. The one with whom she had had a relationship, breaking the temple's regulations.

The two had a love that could not be connected.

In a relationship between a priestess and a paladin who follow the Earth Mother Goddess's doctrines, they cannot be together.

'But if it's a relationship between a saint and a saint appointed by the Earth Mother Goddess...'

It was different.

Beings with titles like saint were in positions that were on a different level from ordinary believers.

If it was that combination, perhaps...

'N-no way!'

Jellicy covered her mouth as she suddenly thought of an incredible possibility.

'The saint...raising a saint to be her...plaything?'

-Shudder.

The lion beastkin's mane trembled slightly.

Fear of confirming the other side of the saint she had thought pure, and conversely, empathy for one who had committed forbidden love welled up.

'...Forbidden love is my specialty.'

Jellicy instinctively realized something akin to a mission.

Jellicy prided herself on having rich dating experience among the believers, most of whom were females who had never even held hands with a man and whose hymens remained intact.

'Perhaps this is the only way I can repay my debt?'

Connecting the saint and the saint.

Jellicy thought that was the minimum repayment to the one who had uncovered the traitor and saved her.

"Um...Lady Jellicy?"

"Hmm? Why, why do you ask, Sir Balkan?"

"No, your expression just became somewhat...lecherous..."

"Ahem! Harrumph. It's nothing."

Just as she had tried to connect Balkan with Cleassia before her betrayal, Jellicy was an evil match-making pest, but before that, she was a believer who could consider others' fatigue.

"I've gotten you involved in a big incident when I only meant to have a simple conversation. There's a waiting room for high-ranking officials at the temple, would you like to stay there for a while?"

"I appreciate the offer, but I have other things to do."

"I see. I'll come find you formally once the cleanup is mostly done. I'll prepare the reward as quickly as possible."

Balkan nodded at those words.

The priests who had gone to call for support were bringing in paladins who had been stationed elsewhere and explaining the situation in detail.

'I can leave the annoying cleanup to them.'

There would be unsettling news from within the temple for a while, but there was no need for him to worry about such trivial matters.

After a brief handshake with Jellicy and some small talk with Beer and Hope, he left the temple immediately.

He had fulfilled his promise to Serif by capturing the traitor and putting her in the temple's underground prison, and he would receive the reward later, so the remaining task was...

"Ah."

Balkan pulled out a letter from his pocket.

The letter that Serif had entrusted him to deliver to Idelbert, which had a strangely fishy scent.

It was oddly similar to the scent of semen, but it made him shake his head, dismissing it as his imagination. Holding the letter, he looked north, toward the outskirts where Idelbert's mansion was located.

Once he delivered this letter, his schedule at the labyrinth would be complete.

~The outskirts of Eden--Idelbert's residence~

That magnificent mansion, once quiet yet splendid, was now half-collapsed.

Balkan blankly stared at the huge ice arrow stuck in the front gate of the mansion.

That chilly, cold magical power was the magic of someone he knew all too well.

What suddenly came to mind was Diana's face filled with determination.

—I should go see Idelbert.

The image of her using rough curses, enough to make one start in surprise, after hearing about Idelbert having intercourse with someone flashed through his mind.

"...Ah..."

So, it ended up like this.

Balkan closed his eyes tightly and prayed for someone's peace with his hands clasped.

"Rest in peace in heaven, Master..."

"Don't send your innocent master away, you foolish disciple."

Raising his head at the immediate response, he saw the ice arrow gradually cracking.

A woman with a trained appearance, covered in dust, moving her black cat tail while clearing away the debris pressing down on her body.

Idelbert naturally smelled Balkan who was staring at her blankly...and frowned.

"Disciple."

"Yes, Master."

"Did you have onahole intercourse with my younger sister?"