**Chapter 272: What I can give (4)**

Mother Earth Goddess Order, Eden Branch.

In the basement of the sacred temple building that gave off an impression of serenity and holiness, there was a place with a completely different atmosphere—gloomy and damp.

"Grr. It's a sacred place that corrects the twisted mentality and ideology of infamous villains, including outlaws and criminals who have hidden in the labyrinth, even in Eden where lawbreakers are abundant."

Jellicy looked at those behind the iron bars with a satisfied smile.

"You crazy bastards who believe in fairy tale gods, you virgin freaks! Get me out of here right now! Otherwise, our outlaw clan will come to crush you!"

"Stop...please, enough..."

"Great warrior and Mother Earth Goddess who sacrificed herself to confine great evil in the labyrinth. On the soil where your sacrifice took root, we have continued our evil deeds that should not have been done. Please forgive the foolish mistakes of the young lambs and please give us a chance to live a new life—"

Various types of people were present among them.

Vicious prisoners who still showed hostility and growled because they hadn't been fully corrected.

Outlaws who had collapsed from exhaustion, bearing traces of "reformation."

And those who recited prayers while reading scriptures as if in a trance.

There were many other types, but those three were the most memorable.

"Not much has changed from the past till now."

Balkan looked at Idelbert who was still nestled in his arms.

She looked at the outlaws behind the iron bars with an expressionless face.

"Come to think of it, Master. I heard you used to belong to the temple in the past."

"Did I tell you that?"

"I didn't hear it directly from you, Master, but from people around."

Idelbert, who had been looking at Balkan for a moment, nodded as if it wasn't a big deal.

"That was the case in the past."

"If you're not affiliated with the temple now, is it okay for us to just enter like this?"

"Who could stop me?"

"...That's true."

It was correct without having to think deeply about it.

The leader of the Adventurers' Union, where two-thirds of those who explore the labyrinth are affiliated.

At the same time, the former Paladin of the Order and the sister of Serif, the current Saint.

Who in the Order could stop someone with these credentials?

Even Jellicy, a mid-rank priest, was following her orders.

Idelbert, who turned her head toward the prisoners again, clicked her tongue.

"It's a bad practice. A remnant of the past."

"...That's unexpected. I didn't think you would sympathize with villains, Master."

"Disciple. It's not sympathy; I mean they should all be killed. People can't be fixed. Especially those who have committed many sins and have already fallen."

"Ah."

Just as I was about to say, "As expected, our Master has a fiery and nasty personality"—

"Your nasty personality hasn't changed a bit."

A voice that sounded disgusted came from ahead.

A middle-aged woman with one eyebrow deeply furrowed and the other eye slightly widened in surprise.

It was an expression that could only be described as disgust.

[Coolid LV.55]

She was the high-rank priest who, according to Hope, oversaw the Eden branch of the Mother Earth Goddess Order.

"...Grr. It's an honor to meet you, Lady Coolid—"

"Skip the greetings. Jellicy, go back and work on your mental discipline. I don't need someone weak who gets defeated by demon worshippers."

"...I understand."

Jellicy, who became dejected at Coolid's reprimand, glanced at Balkan and Idelbert, then bowed her head.

Balkan nodded slightly to send her off and then looked back at Coolid, and their eyes met.

It was proof that Coolid had also been looking at him.

Coolid, after confirming that Jellicy had left, opened her lips.

"Seeing that arrogant beast showing respect, you must be Balkan, the one who caught this guy."

When Balkan turned his head to where she gestured, he saw Cleassia, who was subdued by various restraints and anti-magi devices, sprawled on the floor with her obese body.

She didn't seem to have regained consciousness yet.

Well, come to think of it, it had only been a few hours since the incident.

"Pleased to meet you, Lady Coolid. I'm Balkan, an adventurer."

"Hmph. While those slow and heavy-assed guys were dawdling, my disciple pulled off another feat."

Coolid's brow furrowed slightly as her sarcastic voice turned toward Idelbert.

"You should be lying exhausted somewhere, so why are you here? This is an area restricted to unauthorized personnel."

"When my one and only precious disciple is involved, how could the master not be relevant? Old lady."

Coolid, who was rubbing her deeply furrowed brow, clicked her tongue and sighed.

"The reason I was away from the temple in the first place was because of the fight between you and Diana. Do you not know that it was all thanks to me that there were no casualties when you monstrous women fought so earnestly?"

"I controlled my power that much."

"Right. And by controlling your power, you blew away the outskirts of the only safe zone in the labyrinth."

"It was an abandoned place without proper infrastructure anyway. Hmm? Then it's actually a good thing; now they don't need to do the hard work of groundwork, they just need to fill the land and build structures."

"You shameless— Sigh. Inner peace. Inner peace..."

Coolid, who was about to raise her voice in anger at Idelbert's nonchalant response, took a deep breath and began to recite prayers for mental discipline.

'Somehow, this is different from the impression I had in mind.'

Balkan had thought that a high-rank priest would either be graceful and elegant, caring for people like Serif, or using their power to exert influence and pursue their own interests.

However, the high-rank priest Coolid before his eyes seemed far from such imagination.

'She feels more like a neighborhood older brother who's stuck in a middle management position, swamped with work, and has troublemaker siblings...'

The evidence was that Idelbert wasn't being disrespectful.

Idelbert usually takes good care of her own people but treats others mercilessly.

For her to respond so playfully means they must be quite familiar.

'She even mediated the battle with Diana...'

Balkan's wariness toward Coolid decreased slightly.

"First, I should express my gratitude for covering up the unfortunate incident that occurred at the temple while I was away."

"Not at all. It's only natural for an adventurer who receives help from and coexists with the temple."

"You're humble. Your reaction is quite different from your master's. I hope you maintain that mindset."

Coolid approached and naturally extended her hand.

As Balkan grasped her hand with appropriate courtesy, he felt a sensation like a static electricity shock.

And then, he felt a sensation of divine power and magic flowing from their clasped hands examining his entire body.

At the same time, he intuited that the priest before him was sizing him up.

That intuition was not wrong.

'...This is insane.'

Coolid held her breath as she felt the quality of the divine power pooled in Balkan's lower abdomen.

'To think that such divine power would exist twice in this world...'

Coolid had heard about the series of disturbances immediately upon her return to the temple.

What reached her ears was not just the commotion surrounding Jellicy.

—A saint has appeared and punished the servants of demon worshippers!

Such arrogant stories had spread widely among the mid- and low-rank paladins and priests.

Until just a moment ago, she had thought it was a foolish and ignorant rumor.

'With this much divine power, it's not unreasonable to make such a mistake...!'

-GRAAAAASP!!!

Coolid's eyes widened at the sudden tremendous grip she felt.

Balkan.

That man wearing the dark gray helmet was gripping Coolid's hand with tremendous strength and muscle.

But it wasn't just the grip strength that surprised her.

There were several upper-rank adventurers with this level of strength.

She couldn't help but chuckle at the fact that he was comparable to an upper-rank adventurer, but that wasn't what surprised Coolid the most.

'He's mimicking it.'

The applied technique of flowing divine power and magic into the opponent to discern their condition.

That technique, an application of the priest's basic ability used to heal oneself or others or to instill miracles.

That technique, which had taken Coolid, who was called a prodigy, at least half a year to master, the man before her was copying it straight away!

'...Truly, a talent bestowed by the divine.'

'Dumping all points into Finesse stat feels awesome.'

While Coolid was marveling at Balkan's genius, and Balkan was expressing surprise at the stat that allowed him to clumsily copy her technique, they were each amazed at different aspects.

"Stop drooling over my disciple."

Idelbert intervened between them again.

"...Ahem. Excuse me. I held a man's hand for too long."

"Not at all. I gained something good from it."

"Gained something good...Haha! Like master, like disciple I see."

Coolid chuckled and looked at Idelbert.

"I hope your personality doesn't rub off on that child."

"Well. They say that you become like the one you love."

"...What? You. How old are you to be with that young and fresh-bodied child— mmph!"

Idelbert, who had risen with her injured body, covered the mouth of Coolid, who had referred to Balkan as "that child" in a rather affectionate tone.

"What, what's this..."

After watching Idelbert and Coolid squabble for a while, Balkan turned to look at Cleassia, who had belatedly regained consciousness.

Her eyes widened as she faced the situation where a high-ranking priest of the temple and the leader of the Adventurers' Union were arguing in front of her behind iron bars.

"What else could it be, you bitch."

Cleassia’s eyes bulged at Balkan's sneer.

Her mouth let out a fierce roar as she belatedly grasped the situation.

"You damn bastard! You! Someone who should serve the demon with us betrays us?!"

"What are you talking about? How can I betray you when we were never together in the first place?"

Cleassia’s fat neck turned red and blue at Balkan's response, which was mixed with laughter and mockery.

"Don't lie! I saw it! With these two eyes, I clearly saw you causing the magi explosion!"

"You're the one talking nonsense, you vicious demon worshipper. This child handling magi? I just confirmed this child's divine power. As expected of a servant of the Demon of Envy, who has been instigating and brainwashing to cause rifts in the temple and various groups for a long time, you're really good at running your mouth even in this situation."

Coolid, who had felt the divine power residing in Balkan's body earlier, dismissed Cleassia’s words as nonsense and sneered.

"No, that's not it... Aaargh! Aaaaargh!!!!"

Cleassia felt an unbearable frustration.

That damn man had somehow bewitched the high-ranking priest before her, and there was no sign they would even listen to what she had to say.

Moreover, beside him was...

"Hey."

CRASH!!!

"Kuheock!!"

Idelbert, who had smashed through the iron bars and grabbed Cleassia’s thick neck, glared at her with fierce eyes.

"That bastard, the demon worshipper of envy..."

Eyes filled with fierce anger and hostility squeezed Cleassia’s neck and asked.

"Where is that bitch who tried to brainwash my younger sister hiding?"