**Chapter 277: Hello? (1)**

**-**Crunch...

The soft, plump body of a woman mercilessly pressed down on my torso.

The cat ears poking through the nun's veil and the sensation of the pure white cat tail wrapped around my waist conveyed a strong sense of delight.

Looking into those eyes gazing up at me from the perfect angle inside the helmet, I found myself once again marveling at Serif's appearance.

Could sisters really be this different from each other?

Unlike Idelbert, who was wild enough to survive well on her own if thrown into the wilderness, Serif naturally evoked a desire to protect her, to ensure not even a single hair on her body would be harmed.

I could understand why Idelbert wanted to kill the Envy worshiper who targeted Serif.

If someone targeted such a little sister, they deserved nothing but death.

-Squeeze...

"Eek...!"

As I embraced Serif, she flinched in surprise and her cat ears perked up.

"Isn't that the saint from the Earth Mother Order...?"

"What's going on? Are my eyes deceiving me? That saint is embracing a man so passionately...?"

"No way. It must be someone else who just looks similar."

"But that priest's robe is—"

"Ah, um..."

Serif's red eyes darted around as she heard the explorers whispering around us.

It was clear how impulsively she had thrown herself into my arms.

I led Serif to a deserted alley to escape people's gazes. Only then did the tense Serif urgently ask:

"A-are you hurt anywhere, Balkan?! Cleassia, no. What name and appearance did that woman have? She's dangerous! Nate Elin headed to the temple first, so for now—"

"First, please calm down a bit."

"Ah. Yes. Whew..."

"Take a deep breath. Slowly."

"Yes...Hoo..."

I first calmed Serif, who was urgently asking about my well-being and recent events.

Fortunately, she followed my instructions and regulated her breathing slowly.

Looking at her now more relaxed expression, I asked:

"I only contacted you a day ago, and you're already here?"

It was just yesterday that I met Cleassia and sent a signal to Serif.

She was on the surface, and she arrived here in just one day?

It was an insane speed beyond being astonishing, and hard to believe even for Serif, a level 50 high priest.

"Yes. I was lucky. I left as quickly as possible before the labyrinth entrance portal closed, found two transfer traps to cross levels... I came quite, intensely."

Only then did I notice her priest robes torn and tattered in several places.

Imagining Serif rushing here without hesitation and enduring injuries after receiving my contact made my heart flutter slightly.

Who wouldn't be happy knowing someone put everything aside and hurried here out of concern for your safety?

"Excuse me for a moment."

"Eh, wh-what are you...?"

When I carefully moved my hand to her side chest, where her ribs meet the boundary of her plump breasts, her cheeks flushed red with embarrassment.

But soon Serif's eyes widened as she felt the warm sensation of healing miracle flowing from my fingertips.

"My goodness...You've become so familiar with healing miracles in such a short time...Amazing!"

"It's thanks to having a good teacher."

"Eh...? I-I couldn't have been that helpful..."

"If you hadn't walked me through it step by step, I wouldn't have had any idea how to start."

"R-really...? Hehe...Next time, I should teach you various other things too..."

It was actually thanks to Serif that I made the connection between the Radiance Blessing and miracle applications in the first place.

She seemed happy yet embarrassed that her teachings had been helpful, blushing and swishing her cat tail back and forth before suddenly coming to her senses and asking:

"By the way, what about that woman? You being here means that woman's location—"

"I caught her."

"Pardon?"

"I said I caught her. That one."

When I said I had already caught Cleassia, she tilted her head with a puzzled expression.

"Caught her? That woman? Who did? Did someone else help you?"

"I caught her myself."

"...What?"

My simple answer brought even greater confusion to her face.

Well, given the last time Serif saw me, I wouldn't have been able to catch that person...but now that I've grown stronger, it's different.

"Would you like to go see for yourself?"

Since seeing with her own eyes would help her understand faster, I headed toward the temple with the saint.

"Well, look who's graced us with their presence."

Those were the first words Cleassia uttered from behind the iron bars of the temple's underground prison when she saw Serif.

Serif's expression hardened at these first words filled with slight disgust and contempt.

"You've got quite a mouth on you! You insolent traitor!"

Nate Elin, the paladin escort who had confirmed Cleassia’s imprisonment before Serif and I arrived, reproached her on Serif's behalf, but to no effect.

"Strange words. I never betrayed anyone to begin with. We never had any faith in the Earth Mother goddess from the start."

"...'We,' you say."

"......"

I glanced at Serif, who was murmuring coldly as if devoid of emotion.

That cold expression was not the smile she had shown me just moments ago.

"...When you say 'we'."

That mechanical, cool expression I had vaguely sensed whenever Serif smiled at others.

"Does that include the high priest who worked with you while you pretended to be a believer with your false face?"

And that question must be the reason why Serif has been chasing after Envy’s worshiper all this time.

Moreover, if what she said was true, it seemed that Cleassia had previously infiltrated the temple by changing her face and name with the blessing imbued with Envy’s power.

"That person whom I considered a mother, the priest who brought us sisters from the back alley to the temple and taught us faith...the one my sister killed..."

The priest killed by Idelbert in the past was the one who picked up the abandoned Serif and Idelbert from the back alley and the priest who must have cared for Serif so tenderly that she once felt like a mother.

Serif had made efforts in various ways to investigate the death of her benefactor, and now.

"...Was that person also one of those you call 'we'?"

At the question asking whether the person she thought was her benefactor was actually a minion of the Envy Worshiper who manipulated and brainwashed others...Cleassia’s lips twisted strangely.

Just as those lips were about to open—

Step.

Footsteps from behind pressed down on the tense atmosphere around.

"Everyone out."

Serif's cat tail stood straight up at the brief voice.

Eventually, Serif's red eyes turned toward the source of the footsteps.

"Idelbert..."

Idelbert, the black cat beastkin with similarly red eyes, raised her head at Serif's murmur.

After gazing at her sister who had called her name with a complicated expression for a moment, Idelbert sighed and turned her head toward me.

"Disciple. Why do you keep coming here? This is a restricted area for authorized personnel only."

"The paladins who saw my helmet let me in without any hesitation."

"That's because the saint is behind you."

"Master, you're not exactly authorized personnel either."

"I have some standing around here. Besides, I've been staying at the temple since my house collapsed because of Diana anyway."

-Grab.

Idelbert grabbed my wrist and led me.

"Let's go. We need to leave early tomorrow morning to capture the Envy Worshiper. The letter you sent through that criminal woman should arrive around then too."

"Wait. What did you say?!"

Serif grabbed my wrist and pulled me sharply in response to Idelbert's muttered words.

Then Idelbert's grip tightened even more.

This time, Idelbert pulled my arm and embraced me tightly into her arms.

Suddenly caught between two female cat sisters, with my wrists being pulled in both directions—a blissful punishment, if you could call it that.

Despite the awkward situation, the two women continued arguing while staring at each other.

"You're going to capture the Envy Worshiper tomorrow? With Balkan?! Do you think that makes any sense?! No, more importantly, how did you even find out that person's location—"

"You don't need to know. Stay out of it, Saint. This is my business."

"Like this time, the Envy Worshiper has caused great harm to the Order. Not just the Order, but they've planted spies everywhere, corrupting the Labyrinth City—they're an undisputed villain! As a high priest with the title of Saint, I have the right to ask about this matter!"

The white cat beastkin and the black cat beastkin glared at each other.

Although the black cat beastkin was much taller and better built, forcing the white cat to look up at her, those red eyes didn't back down at all.

I watched Idelbert staring into Serif's passionate eyes and expressed my doubt.

'Why won't she tell her?'

Idelbert's current goal is to eliminate the Envy Worshiper.

The reason is that the Envy Worshiper tried to brainwash Serif, and almost succeeded.

Recalling Serif's words just now, the person who attempted the brainwashing was clearly the high priest who brought Idelbert and Serif to the Order.

But whether due to remnants of the brainwashing or something else, Serif seemed not to know in detail why Idelbert killed the high priest, and Idelbert, despite knowing the truth, remained silent and willingly played the villain.

Though Idelbert's true intentions were unclear, as a brother who also has a sister, I could somewhat understand her actions.

'Is she worried about Serif?'

Perhaps Idelbert was hoping that her sister wouldn't get involved in dangerous matters.

After all, when Serif reluctantly uttered the word "sister," all of Idelbert's cool composure had crumbled into a broad smile.

As a brother with a sister, I could fully sympathize with that feeling, but...

'Doing this will only be poisonous.'

I could also predict the outcome of such an immature approach.

Trouble born from misunderstandings and lack of communication becomes poison for both parties.

"If that's your attitude, I have my own methods."

While I understand the desire to protect one's sister, what becomes of a sister who is unilaterally isolated from danger disguised as a benefactor, left only with questions and confusion?

"Explorer Union Leader Idelbert Adeline. As Serif Adeline, Saint of the Earth Mother Order, I request."

She will chase after the truth, even if tossed by countless waves and winds and struck against rocks.

"I will also participate in the subjugation of the Envy Worshiper."

At her sister's declaration to head to the front lines to learn the truth, the older sister's expression hardened.