**Chapter 3: No more ordinary days (3)**

"'I embarrassed myself in front of my benefactor."

“Hmm. Hmm... Oh, no...”

I had no memory of taking my clothes off, but I could easily figure out why my clothes were off.

The t-shirt, which had become saggy after being worn sparingly for a long time due to poor circumstances, ended its life after a fierce fight with the goblins.

'It's not a cloak, how did it get torn like this?’

It was no longer clothing, more like a rag.

The pants were in a similar state of disrepair, though I suppose I could still call it a tattered fashion statement.

I wore the unsalvageable t-shirt as a cloak and the pants as pants.

Still, it's better than nothing, but the space itself was a bit chilly. Looking around, it resembled a large cave.

A passageway about five meters wide by six meters long, illuminated by glowing stones embedded in the walls.

It looked like a dungeon or a labyrinth in a video game.

"⋯No way. Is that all you're wearing?"

"Yes. My clothes are a little tattered from the battle."

"⋯You've gotten raunchier."

"What?"

"Oh, nothing."

Did I just mishear? I've gotten slutty? Who? Me?

'⋯You must have misheard,' I thought, tired from the day's events.

I rubbed my stabbed thigh through my ripped jeans.

'The potions must be working.’

The muscle was torn and bleeding profusely, but new flesh had sprouted, scarless except for a slight soreness.

I was expecting a full twelve weeks, but when I checked, my other wounds were almost completely healed.

Oh, and speaking of goblins, I remembered another story.

"I saw some men who were attacked by goblins, do you know what happened to them?"

"They're all dead."

"⋯Yes?"

I stiffen at the sudden bombshell.

Dead? Dead? Why?

At the end of the battle, when I headed toward the men's packs for the antidote, they were still wiggling their hips and craving goblin pussy.

How could those guys, who were so awesome in so many ways, be dead?

"No way, the goblins took care of the men first and-"

"There was no sign of goblin attack. By the time I got there, they'd all bitten their tongues off and killed themselves. Isn't it common enough in fairy tales for men who've been raped by monsters to commit suicide because they can't take the pleasure and go stupid?"

"No, no, no."

It's all nonsense.

The words came up to my chin and stopped.

My head was spinning from hearing something that didn't make sense to me.

No, it wasn't my common sense in the first place.

How could it be common sense that goblins were alive and breathing, and that potions could instantly regenerate new flesh?

But now I have to accept it as common sense.

I've just been in a life-and-death battle with goblins, and I've been healed.

With flexible thinking, I forced the information into my head that monster rape = pleasure pickled suicide ending.

"So it's even more amazing that a man could be dragged into a goblin lair and survive without being raped, and then go on to wipe out the goblins."

"I was lucky."

"Luck is skill."

The armored knight complimented me, but I was indeed lucky.

Honestly, I think it's a miracle I'm still alive.

If I hadn't happened to have the explorers' gear nearby and the armored knight's help, I would have been dead.

I didn't want to stay this close to death for long.

I already missed my sister, who would tell me about her warm meals and my warm home.

"By any chance, do you know how to get out of this cave?"

"Are you thinking of leaving the labyrinth? More than that, aren't you an explorer? How could you not know that?"

"I got hit in the head right before by a goblin, and my memory has been fuzzy ever since."

I lied.

Who would believe something that doesn't even fit the title of a light novel, such as "After work, I entered a magic circle and it turned out to be a goblin den?"

But it's true that I got hit in the head.

"Hmm, definitely. That could be it."

-Swoosh!

The armored knight stuck his hand in the air. To my eyes, the armored knight's right hand seemed to suddenly disappear.

‘What's that?’

Is it some kind of inventory ability? My common sense is failing me.

The armored knight's hand nonchalantly withdrew from the air, revealing a scroll.

"There. We are here now. The deepest part of the first floor of the Labyrinth. The escape portal, on the other hand, is here. It's in the center of the first floor."

"How long would that take, roughly, in walking time?"

"It took me about four hours. If we meet monsters along the way, it's even longer."

"⋯By monsters, you mean those, uh, goblin-like creatures?"

"That's right. The only monsters on the first floor are goblins."

Four hours. I thought it wasn't that far, but it was.

It would be a journey that would require a lot of stamina, considering the monsters and possible battles.

"If you're going to wander the labyrinth, you should have a map. Take this with you. I have some spares. Oh, and here's an antidote. Goblins work with poison, so it'll come in handy just in case."

The armored knight handed me a map of the first floor of the Labyrinth and tucked the antidote inside.

"Thank you, sir. Not only for saving my life, but for this. I don't know how I'll ever be able to repay you."

"Nothing. It's a small price to pay."

I bowed my head to the armored knight, who smirked and waved his hand.

At the same time, a small curiosity arose. Usually, adventurers and explorers in the media were extremely selfish.

"Could you at least tell me your name, I'd really like to return the favor."

Moreover, if I accept this kind of thing willingly, I will get in trouble. I took it because I needed it right away, but it might come back as debt later.

Before that happens, you need to repay them. To do that, I need to know the name.

"⋯Name. A name. Hmm."

The armored knight was unexpectedly reluctant to speak. As if he was reluctant to reveal his name.

"⋯⋯White Royal Knight. Hmm. That's my name."

"Are you the White Royal Knight?"

"⋯No, without the. It's just White Royal Knight."

‘How can someone be named White Royal Knight?’

He said his name, which is a pseudonym to anyone who hears it.

"⋯Yes. White Royal Knight. If we ever meet again, I will surely repay your favor."

"Are you thinking of leaving already?"

"Yes."

"⋯Ah. That's right⋯"’

‘What.’

A little while ago, he was a knight in armor, but now he looks like a kid who is saddened by the news that his friend is going away.

"⋯I look forward to seeing you again someday."

"⋯! That's right, I'll look forward to it!"

I respond in kind, and the response is fierce.

I was embarrassed by the sudden reaction, but I let it go. I was mentally exhausted and didn't want to think too much about it.

"Here, the axe and helmet you used to fight with. I brought them for you."

"Ah. Thank you."

I took the axe and put on the helmet. The helmet wrapped around my face, narrowing my vision and making it harder to breathe, but so be it.

I must wear the helmet if I am to have any chance of survival. The shock of being hit in the head by a goblin was still fresh.

"Well, then, let's really get going."

I bowed my head once more to the armored knight and turned to leave.

"Before you go, I have a piece of advice."

The armored knight said quietly. I glanced back at the armored knight, surprised by the strange atmosphere.

"⋯You. You must wear the helmet. No matter what."

⋯

Tsk!

On the way to the escape portal I've already decapitated the fifth goblin.

"They come out whenever they can, bastards."

Maybe two hours had passed.

I don't have a watch, so I don't know exactly how long it's been, but my belly clock tells me it's been about two hours.

Tsk-tsk-tsk.

My stomach screamed at me, asking why I hadn't eaten even though it was long past mealtime.

"I'm hungry. I'm hungry!'

But I have no food. All I have is my helmet and axe, a map from the knight and some antidote.

'Let's hold on a little longer. Two more hours of walking and I'll be there.’

Another three hours passed. In total, I walked for five hours. An hour longer than the armored knight had said.

‘What's wrong. Why isn't the exit here?’

But the escape portal was nowhere in sight.

I unfolded the map and looked again at my starting point and where the escape portal was drawn.

Straight, left, left, straight, left, straight.

"⋯?"

I suddenly realized something was wrong.

I'd been walking straight all this time. Straight down long, long corridors.

But on the map, there are four forks in the road to the escape portal, and two more straight lines.

In other words, I hadn't even reached the first fork yet.

- It's taken me about four hours.

Four hours by White Royal Knight standards.

I wonder how many hours it would take by my standards?

- Tsk, tsk.

My belly clock screamed.

"⋯Fucked."

Something more dangerous than the beast was coming.

\*\*\*

I thought only monsters were dangerous.

After all, isn't it said that people can only properly perceive the dangers that are immediately in front of them?

The goblins were the first thing I encountered in this crazy place, and I thought that once I defeated them, I would be able to escape the labyrinth safely.

But no.

It's wide. Too wide.

This labyrinth was fucking wide.

"Fuck. Fuck."

The curse came out of my spinal cord on reflex as I faced the first fork after a long time.

Nine hours.

It had taken me nine hours to reach the first fork in the road.

The first of the three straight passages depicted on the map has the lowest scale ratio.

It took me nine hours to travel through this one passage.

- Purrrrrrrrr

It's long past mealtime, but my stomach is screaming because nothing has entered my mouth.

Am I just hungry? My throat is burning, too. Water. I crave water.

Up until now, I've been collecting and swallowing as much saliva as I can to quench my thirst, but now I can't even salivate.

Immediately after my hard work, I was transferred to the labyrinth, fought bloody goblins, and walked for nine hours without being able to rest properly.

I hadn't eaten a proper meal, or even drank water. I was even sleepy.

Worst case scenario.

I'm at my physical limit, and I have a long way to go.

I didn't know if it would be another day, maybe even a couple of days.

"This is too much."

"Kerk, Kerk!"

"Ah. Please."

The goblins approached, huffing and puffing their hideous abominations.

Those bastards are the worst. They're the reason I never get any rest.

I'd rather just walk through the labyrinth in peace, but being on the lookout for goblin attacks is mentally and physically draining.

Even when I try to take a break, they always sneak up on me, lurking, watching for an angle to attack.

"Are you alone?"

"Keruk, Keruk!"

The good news is that unlike in the goblin lair, they act individually.

"Come here."

"Kekeruk!"

Tsk!

As I dodged the stupid knife-crossing attack and slashed at it with my axe, an axe flower bloomed on its head.

The whole process of dodging and slashing was as natural as water.

I could feel myself getting more and more comfortable with the killing process.

How many have I killed so far? I don't know, but I think I've killed at least ten.

"Just a little more strength."

Lamenting doesn't change anything. I resumed walking in silence.

"⋯⋯"

I pass two forks and enter the second straight path.

As I walk, I hear several footsteps ahead of me.

Instinctively, I realize that the footsteps are much heavier than the goblins.

- Goblins are the only monsters on the first floor of the Labyrinth.

So who could these footsteps belong to...?