**Chapter 308: Return to Ground (4)**

"Is that... really true?"

"Yes!"

Diana looked at me nodding vigorously with a bright smile in response to her question.

The one who brought news that he had found a way to break the curse that had been tormenting her all this time was wearing the most joyful smile she had ever seen from him.

"That's wonderful, mother! This can eliminate not just that curse, but all of mother’s curses!"

Her adopted daughter, who heard the news alongside her, also smiled brightly and rejoiced at the news.

The adopted daughter's instincts as a female expressed subtle wariness at the fact that the [Curse of Rejecting Inferior Penis Intrusion] would be lifted, meaning there would be more people coveting his sperm.

But her greater identity as an adopted daughter made her rejoice as if it were her own matter at the news of the curse's destruction that had been tormenting and weakening her mother all this time.

Diana listened to the two people's voices while blankly looking down at her own hands.

'This curse... will be lifted?'

It had already been well over 10 years since she began her uncomfortable coexistence with the curse cast by the demon of lust.

In the past, she had struggled desperately to break this curse but even the religious order that managed blessings and curses couldn't find an answer.

Even the labyrinth that bestowed blessings and curses couldn't provide an answer.

The day when the lust demon's curse went berserk, and for the first time in her life, her brain was pickled in hazy lust and she masturbated like a beast.

The day she realized she could no longer develop further...

Diana decided to retire as if giving up on herself.

This curse would never be lifted in the future.

She had been living thinking it was a curse she would have to carry to her grave someday.

But then.

"It will take about two weeks, but where is that? I never even thought the curse could really be lifted, this is beyond expectations—"

The man who found a way to lift the curse that had driven her life to ruin, as if he had found a way to lift his own curse, was laughing and rejoicing even more than the person concerned.

-Thump.

'...Ah...'

Diana closed her eyes at the vibration she felt from deep within her chest.

-Thump. Thump.

That heartbeat grew increasingly intense.

Her heart began to beat louder and faster.

-Thump. Thump. Thump!

The moment she opened her eyes while feeling her heart beating rapidly.

-Huuuuug!!

Diana tightly embraced the man before her.

Due to their size difference, she fit snugly into the man's arms, but Diana stretched out her arms and hugged him tightly.

She placed her palms on his solid back and felt his warmth.

"...Diana?"

"Thank you. Balkan..."

She spoke to him as he called her name in bewilderment.

Thank you.

There was no other way to express this feeling besides those words.

"Really, truly... thank you."

As she hugged him tightly and murmured the same words, she felt warm warmth from her back as well.

Unlike Diana who was struggling to fit in his arms, his long arms easily embraced Diana with room to spare.

-Pat. Pat.

He said nothing and just gently patted the back of the woman who had emotionally thrown herself into his arms.

The pleasant rhythm coming from her back mixed with her rapidly beating heart, and one thought bloomed in Diana's mind.

'This wasn't... a curse, but a blessing.'

The curse of lust had left an indelible mark on Diana.

That curse had blocked her future, made her give up on herself, and only after more than ten years had passed could she let go of those depressed feelings from that time but conversely because the curse appeared, she decided to retire.

She built an inn and took in the only family member of her deceased friend...

—Who are you? Reveal your identity!

On that cold and dark night.

To him who was covered in blood and wary of the world... she was able to offer a bowl of warm soup.

Huuuuug—

The one who had grown beyond recognition in just one year was now embracing her with warm warmth.

"I really can't match Balkan..."

"I should be the one saying that."

"Hehe. Really..."

The man and woman who embraced each other tightly looked at each other and chuckled, then gazed at each other intently.

As their breathing faces drew closer and closer, Diana pressed her lips to his.

"......"

"......"

The woman and man who gazed at each other hotly immediately headed to the bedroom.

"......Agh, really...!!"

Ellie, who had quietly slipped away because the atmosphere between the two was too intense and she couldn't bear to interrupt, sighed softly at the sounds coming from beyond the room.

Despite her heart that she shouldn't disturb the two people.

-Perk. Perk.

As soon as she pressed her sensitive elf ears to the wall, lewd moans could be heard, so she couldn't stop this guilt-ridden act.

Listening to the mating sounds of two adults mixed with rough breathing and sweet emotions, her body heated up, and she slipped her fingers between her slightly lowered panties while making a slightly tearful face.

"If this happens, uncle really becomes... not oppa either, but daddy...!"

Squeeeeeze—

Ellie, ignoring her uterus that was lewdly contracting as if that wouldn't be bad either, tapped her clitoris while recalling her first experience with uncle, oppa, and daddy.

I spent a night with Diana, caught up in the atmosphere.

Although it ended with mild stimulation since the curse hadn't been lifted yet, neither of us minded much.

When we return to the surface, we'll be able to lift the curse.

Now that I've completed the request to subjugate the Elder Lich and even made Lilith submit, there's no major business left in the labyrinth.

'Come to think of it...'

Elder Lich subjugation, confrontation with sloth worshipper, elimination of Envy worshipper forces, Lilith's submission...

Looking at it all together, I had done more things than I thought, and each one was a significant matter.

And from my experience so far, the more you roll around exhaustingly in the labyrinth, the higher the probability of receiving blessings or curses.

"...Should I have some expectations?"

"Don't worry! Serif-sama personally said to pay Sir Balkan compensation equivalent to what he sacrificed for the religious order! Grrroar!"

When I turned my head at the response to my muttering, the lion beastman priest Jellicy was nodding her head vigorously.

I wasn't talking about compensation... but it would look strange if I didn't accept the temple's goodwill.

"Haha, I'm always grateful for the temple's grace."

"Grr! Our religious order is only expressing deep gratitude to Sir Balkan who helps even in these chaotic times! Moreover, you even corrected my foolish actions!"

Jellicy, who had fallen into the trap of Cleassia, a remnant of the Envy worshipper who died leaving behind a soul stone, and was used, said this while handing me a box the size of a forearm.

The box with white background and sparse gold plating looked like a valuable art piece in itself.

After receiving it, I immediately opened the box to check its contents.

60 gold coins as compensation for capturing Cleassia, 40 gold coins as a token of the temple's goodwill...A total of 100 gold coins.

"Urk..."

"Are you alright?!!"

"Ah, I'm fine."

I almost fell over as my head became dizzy from the overwhelming number.

100 gold coins. 100 gold coins!

I was speechless at the violent amount of money I had never held in my hands before.

It was an amount that an ordinary person could live without working for a lifetime without emptying their bank account.

For an explorer, it's an amount that could afford one or two ultimate-grade relics that could even challenge the deep floors.

As I stroked the box containing an amount that a mere intermediate explorer could never even dare to hold, I felt wealthy at heart.

But this wasn't the end.

"Serif-sama said this much wouldn't be enough and ordered preparations for bestowing the highest-level miracle, but..."

"You said she was urgently called to the surface?"

"That's right! Grrroar...!"

Jellicy nodded with a bitter expression.

Originally, Serif was supposed to give this gold coin box as well, but unfortunately, she was called to the surface when I was rescued from the tentacle maze and was sleeping.

Because of that, the question mark blessing I was going to hear from Serif was also pushed back.

"From what I heard briefly, it seems there was an incident on the surface."

They say Idelbert also headed to the surface before Serif.

If master, who wouldn't break her promise to come rescue me from Lilith, hurriedly went up to the surface, something unusual must have happened.

"Grr, it's not quite an incident... Well. Someone of Sir Balkan's level will find out soon. They say suspicious movements were detected in the lawless zone recently."

"Suspicious movements?"

"Mm! The royal knights and labyrinth guards are controlling the lawless zone. I don't know the detailed situation either! Grr!"

Listening to Jellicy’s growling voice, I fell into thought.

'The lawless zone...that's the puppet master's territory.'

Could that woman be plotting something?

Since no answer would come from worrying about it right now, I put aside my thoughts and enjoyed Jellicy’s hospitality before returning to the inn.

[Tomorrow we finally leave this tiresome underground prison.]

"That's right."

As I holed up in my room packing my backpack, Bunny spoke to me.

I had also coordinated schedules with party members.

Departure time to the surface: tomorrow evening.

[So. What are you planning to do with that thing?]

Bunny's eyes looking at the Envy worshipper's soul stone I held to put in my backpack were unusual, like someone expressing regret at being unable to eat a Michelin 3-star course main dish right in front of them.

"It's proof that I subjugated the Envy worshipper, so not yet."

[Why! Honor doesn't feed you...!]

"Through honor, I'll receive rewards from the royal family, and with those rewards, I can defeat stronger enemies to get soul stones for you to eat. Be patient for a better quality meal. I'll feed you this too when things are done."

[Ugh...! Then, it can't be helped... This patient demon will personally endure it for you!]

After chuckling at Bunny who seemed to accept it as if she had no choice, I finished packing my backpack.

Since we have to leave the labyrinth tomorrow, we also took a break from opening the inn today.

Since there's no schedule, I was looking around the kitchen to eat some snacks and rest.

-Thud. Thud.

The inn's front door opened and footsteps could be heard.

Sensing the owner of those footsteps, I frowned slightly.

"Denshi."

At my voice coming from the kitchen, the footsteps stopped abruptly.

The slave who didn't return to the inn last night either, and arbitrarily left her master's side to spend a night out before returning.

As I came out to the lobby thinking whether I should scold her first or ask if she had any worries lately.

"...Huh?"

Seeing Denshi's appearance, I could only stare with my mouth agape.

That Denshi who used to go around every day with bandages wrapped around her chest, wearing T-shirts and short shorts in a slutty outfit...

'She's... wearing clothes?'

She was facing me wearing very, very neat and modest clothes compared to usual.

—They say it's like day and night are reversed, going out when she used to sleep and sleeping when she used to be awake. So I haven't properly seen her lately.

—Should I say her attire became neat...? She's been wearing shirts lately!

At that moment, I recalled Ellie's words about how Denshi seemed to have changed lately.

[Uh...?]

Bunny's voice filled with bewilderment could be heard.

[How is that bastard there...?]

For some reason.

At that moment, my first night with Denshi came to mind.

More precisely, the being that had stolen Denshi's body and taken the pain and pleasure of virginity.

"Ah. Master. I'm back—!"

"Puppet master?"

Right after I spoke that being's name.

"......"

Denshi's expression, who had been greeting me with a welcoming face...suddenly hardened.

Soon after.

"Ha."

She laughed helplessly and sat at the table, muttering softly.

"...This time, you noticed as soon as you saw me?"